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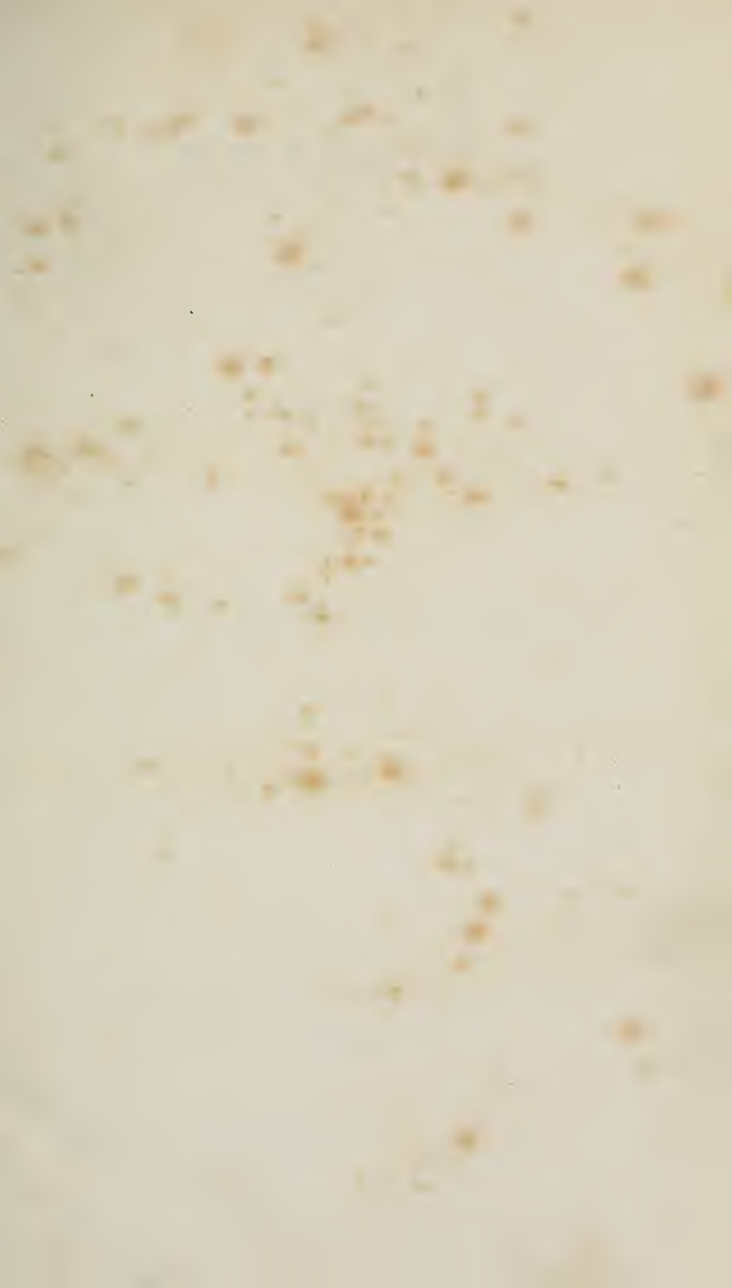


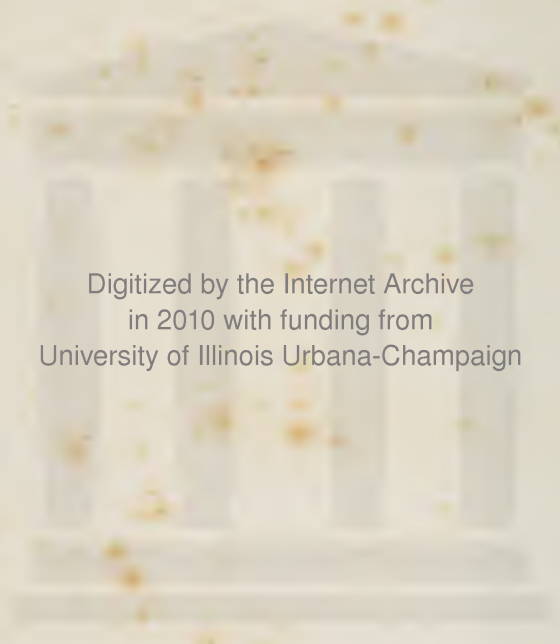
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# ROSABEL,

A NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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BY THE AUTHORESS OF CONSTANCE.

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VOL. I.

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LONDON:

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## CHAPTER I.

“ How long shall I be patient ! Oh, how long  
Shall tender duty make me suffer wrong ? ”

SHAKESPEAR.

IT is now many years since parents were harsh and unjust, or children rebellious ; in these happy times, it is the children who sway, and the parents who sometimes dare to rebel : elopements from parental tyranny, and the miseries of being crossed in love or dress, are now uncommon. In times past, such things occasionally happened.

A winter's sun had set upon the leafless groves of Fairford, a village in one of our northern counties, and a starless and gloomy night had succeeded. A light or two, gleaming from some cottages of the district, might alone reassure the traveller of his approach to social warmth and shelter. But, from the principal house of the village, there streamed a blaze of unusual illumination, which threw upon the

belt of evergreens, by which it was secluded from public view, a reflection sufficient to shew that the broad-leaved laurels, and close junipers were partly clothed with wreaths of snow, whilst the lawn and bank near the house were covered with a light but universal mantle of white.

In the principal apartments within, however, dancing and music were going on, and the sounds of heartfelt merriment were heard: through all the house warmth and cheerfulness prevailed. Whilst, in the servants' hall, they drank to Master Gilbert's return home from India, and hoped that his coming back would be as merry as his parting, Martha, the old nurse, above stairs, was soberly employed in tranquillizing such young members of the family as were too juvenile to sit up late, or were weary, or who ought to be weary, with the night's gaities. She had just finished her task ;—the last unruly member of her establishment was dropping asleep, much against his will, whilst his drowsy ear could continue to catch a sound of the music from below.—Two of Martha's elder subjects pressed, with flushed cheeks, their pillows; her own spectacles were properly

placed, the fire blazing, the candle snuffed, and Martha, with a large basket of dilapidated garments before her, resigning herself to solitude in the midst of gaiety, when a low, but hasty tap was heard at the nursery door. Martha, unwilling to be disturbed, heard it once in sullen silence ; but, when the signal was repeated, she rose, and went to the door, not omitting, in her way, to give a shake to the youngest plague of her dominions ; who, now awakened, peered a large pair of bright black eyes above the coverlid. With some additional irritation at this circumstance, Martha pulled open the door, saying, as she flung it back—

“ Why can’t you come in, Sally ; the door’s not locked ?—But who’s this we have here ? ”—upon seeing a person enter with the commonplace introduction :—

“ It’s a young woman, as says she wants you, Martha.”

“ A young woman, indeed—go down stairs, Sally, and remember you are to knock next time.”

“ Miss Rosabel, dear,” pursued Martha, as she closed the door after her fellow servant ;  
“ are you mad ? ”

“ So you know me, do you, Martha ?” answered the young visitant, in a tone between shame and mirth.

“ What’s come to you, Miss Rosabel—what’s happened to you, to run off from home such a night as this, in such a dress, and walking too ?” continued Martha, looking down reproachfully at the snow-tracks on her nursery hearth.

“ That is not true, Martha ; for I came in a covered cart.”

“ Ah, you’re a lost one, poor dear—and always was a wild one. Have they turned you out of doors then, at last, as they did me ? It was a dark day, Miss Rosabel, that your mother died ; she little thought what her daughter was to come to.”

“ *Her* daughter will never come to any thing that she is ashamed of—will never disgrace herself, Martha,” returned the young lady, drawing herself up.

As she spoke, she took off a large coarse bonnet which she had worn, and a profusion of rich auburn curls, which hung in tresses down her back, as girls of condition long ago wore their hair, fell about her shoulders.

“ And how, Martha, do you think this dress becomes me ?—this bonnet I stole from Phœbe, the scullery maid ; but I left her a much better one in its place : and my gown, and cloak, and hood belong to Bridget, the dairy woman, who is the only person in my confidence. Come, Martha, don’t you be so cross,” she added, coaxingly.

“ Then it’s no bad thoughts as you have in your head, but only a trick of yours, Miss Rosabel, to run off from home for a joke, may be.”

“ I *could* not stay, Martha—would not stay—to be so lectured in the presence of the very servants—treated like a child—for ever in fault—for ever scolded.”

“ Ah ! Miss Rosabel, what will your poor father say ?”

“ Sir John, Martha, will not miss me. Have I ever received one single proof of affection from him ? Do I ever see him ?—Does he not keep his children at an immeasurable distance from him—and leaves us to the self-righteous Mrs. Waldegrave, or to Aunt Alice ? I declare I don’t know which of the two I dislike the most.”

“ You should not speak so, Miss Rosabel ;

and yet, it is what I have heard your mother, poor dear my lady, say many a time."

"I do believe they will all be mightily rejoiced when they hear I am gone to Aunt Evelyn's; and so they will get rid of me altogether. You can give me half of your bed, dear Martha, to-night," added Miss Fortescue, looking round, "and to-morrow, my knight of the cart is to fetch me away again;—it is only Peter, Martha, Bridget's nephew, who drives the Bridgetown errand cart, and I go in most innocent company,—with boxes, hampers, and cheeses."

"Ah! Miss Rosabel; and don't you think that poor Sir John will fret when he hears you are missing, and don't know where you are gone to?—and poor Miss Fortescue, Miss Charlotte, I mean, and Master Hubert, poor fellow, and even Mr. Philip—don't you think they'll fret about you, and have the pools dragged, and I don't know what?"

"The pools, dear Martha, are frozen; so it is impossible for any human being to drown himself in them; the ice is as thick as that about Aunt Waldegrave's heart.—Sir John is expected home in a day or two. I could not,"

she added, dashing a tear from her eye, “ have left the house thus whilst he was in it. Charlotte, poor Charlotte, is wholly under the dominion of my aunts ; she is less sisterly to me than I could bear and expect ; from her I have had no sympathy. Oh ! I like the friend who looks coldly on those who look coldly on me ;—Charlotte is too prudent, too cautious for me. Hubert, poor dear Hubert, would have felt for me ; but he, you know, is at Harrow ; and Philip, who never did feel for any one, is at Oxford.”

She sat down, and leaned musingly over the fire. Just then, a passage door opening, the sounds of music and of laughter broke upon the ear of the young fugitive—she sighed.

“ How that reminds me of home, Martha—of home in Mama’s time—often, you know, she would have the church musicians in for us, when we could get nothing better ; but now, at home, ’tis all state and form, and economy, and improvement.—I hate economy, and I never will give in to improvement—not that sort of improvement—sermons by the hour, and backboards a yard long, and every pains taken to make us as stiff as Aunt Waldegrave,

and as thin as Aunt Alice. My figure will never come up to their model of perfection," she added, throwing back her hood and cloak, and displaying a fine, elastic form, just emerging from the slightness of girlhood into womanly maturity.

"*You* were sent away, Martha, and good easy Mrs. Johnson; and in place of you the dear little twins have a dragon set over them, a creature whose very smile reminds one of grammar, and all that horrid sort of thing. How would poor mama fret, could she know how her darlings are fretted!—That child is like Howard," she continued, looking round at one of the little sleepers; "but he has not Howard's noble features—he has not Howard's blood in his veins: there's a great deal in that; is there not, Martha?"

"My dear Miss Rosabel," said Martha, "that was said more like your aunt Mrs. Waldegrave, than your aunt Mrs. Evelyn."

"It is true, Martha, that I, who am now an outcast, have nothing (no—obliged to errand boys, and scullery maids," and to old nurses, thought she) "have nothing to do with pride;—but where are you going, Martha?"

“ Dear Miss Rosabel, only to fetch you some supper, dear ; I will set it in the school room ; not a soul will see you ; and then you shall go to bed, dear, and we will see about further matters in the morning.” Thus saying, the anxious and affectionate domestic hurried away, and Rosabel was left, for a short time, to her own reflections.

On descending to the lower regions, Martha found that some suspicions of the rank and intentions of her guest had reached that sphere of curiosity. Peter, the carrier-boy, had not been altogether trust-worthy, and had whispered, to his friend, the footman, that he had conveyed a runaway young lady to see her former nurse. From the footman, the intelligence travelled to the housemaid, who communicated it to one of the young ladies, who had quitted the dancing room to repair a fracture in her dress. The news was speedily circulated through the ball room, until it reached a circle of young men, who had congregated together in the true national spirit of English fashion, between a circle of ladies and the fire-place ; having, as it seems, that amiable conviction on their minds, that the fair sex can never be

cold. There was, at the time, a pause in the dance, which some of the young gentlemen proposed to fill up by attempting to obtain a sight of the young fugitive ; but they were gravely admonished of the impropriety, and convinced of the impossibility of the attempt, by Mr. Warner, the master of the house, who assured them that, whilst under his roof, Miss Fortescue should meet with no sort of molestation.

This declaration was, of course, highly approved by the graver portion of the company, although received with some indications of disappointment by the young men ; but it was observed, that, during the next dance, Henry Warner, and Mr. Belfield, a young gentleman of fortune in the neighbourhood, stole away behind a large Japan screen, which stood in one corner of the ball room.

## CHAPTER II.

“ Thus Nature gives us (let it check our pride)  
The virtue nearest to our vice allied.”

POPE.

MISS FORTESCUE had finished her solitary repast in the school room, and was awaiting the return of old Martha to conduct her to her sleeping quarters; when a sort of rustling among the trees, which partly shrouded the unshuttered window of the apartment in which she sat, attracted her notice. She raised her head, which she had rested upon her hands, and looked earnestly at the window, which was scarcely one story from the ground. Nothing, however, but a few evergreen leaves, rendered conspicuous by the heavy, but compact accumulation of snow pressing upon them, met her view. She resigned herself again to her own reflections: the sounds of music were no longer distinct, and all was silence around her. Admitted by stealth, and upon sufferance, to

the home of others, possibly repentance for the rash flight from discipline and restraint had some share in the sadness which overspread her countenance. Again, however, were her thoughts disturbed by a rustling noise outside the window ; and this time she saw that some unseen force had brushed off the snow which had rested upon the broad laurel leaves that had before caught her eye. A little alarmed, she turned to the door, to make the best of her way to old Martha's more secure and appropriate domicile. The door of the room was, however, locked ; for Martha, well aware of the tendency of her master's grown-up sons to mischief, was resolved that no one should intrude upon her "dear Miss Rosabel's" retreat, and had not only secured the door outside, but had taken the key with her. The young lady was therefore obliged to remain in her present state of durance ; and, being naturally of a fearless temper, she began to laugh at her own apprehensions, and resolved to make her way boldly up to the window, and investigate the cause of the noise which had disturbed her ; but she repented her temerity ; for as she advanced heroically to the window, a pair of bright eyes,

fixed upon her, met her gaze. She screamed, and caught hold of the nearest chair to support her from sinking with terror ; and her screams were converted into piercing shrieks, when the window being hastily thrown open, two young gentlemen, in full dancing costume, sprang into the apartment.

Rosabel was scarcely sixteen years of age ; a wild, and wilful, and thoughtless girl, with an imperfect education, and principles of action not as yet developed. Treated, since the death of a too indulgent mother, with the rigour which was, half a century ago, considered as the only proper method of managing servants, and children, and all other inferior animals, she deemed it a proof of heroism and spirit to run away from a house of tyranny, to a region of affection, and of indulgence, which she expected to enjoy under the roof of Mrs. Evelyn, her mother's sister. But Rosabel had the most entire guilelessness of character, and modesty of demeanour ; she had also a great degree of pride, family pride in particular ; she was keenly alive to insults, although hitherto she had never experienced that, which of all others afflicts a youthful female mind when

properly constituted—an insult to her character as a young and unprotected woman.

Notwithstanding her alarm, it required but a few minutes to shew her that the two young men who had now come unbidden into her presence, had done so from an impertinent curiosity, and an insolent frolic. They both, indeed, began apologizing for their intrusion, but with so much haste and indiscretion, as to make the matter far worse than on their first entrance.

“I am quite shocked, Miss—Miss Fortescue,” began the younger of the two, “I’m shocked, quite shocked at Mr. Belfield for frightening you so—you see it was quite accidental, our being—our—our being—”

“I am sure,” interrupted his companion, “we are quite shocked at having alarmed Miss Fortescue.”

“We never meant to come in,” interrupted Henry Warner.

“And we now beg leave,” continued Mr. Belfield, “with many apologies, to retire.”

“—And the sooner the better,” said Henry, “for I hear my father’s voice on the stairs. “Now,” said Mr. Belfield, “for a lecture.—

Swear, Henry, my dear fellow, swear that it was purely accidental, our being perched up in the tree like two owls ; declare that we dropped down from the clouds, or came down the chimney. — But really,” he added, conceitedly, and with an officious civility which, from one of his class, was not calculated to propitiate Miss Fortescue, — “really I never consider myself so unlucky as when I alarm the fair sex. I must hope for forgiveness,” he continued, bowing, as he tapped his snuff-box, and, holding it with one arm extended, took a pinch, in the most approved style of those days of attitudes and dancing schools.

As he spoke, a procession, headed by Mr. Warner, with a tall candle in his hand, entered the room. There was a set of inquisitive faces looking over their host’s shoulder, whilst Martha, flustered, and quite “put out,” as she called it, crept in, in the rear. She had, however, apprized her master of the circumstances of Miss Fortescue’s flight ; but the screams of the young lady had induced the opinion, not indeed by any means unwarrantable, that some mental aberration was connected with the source of this unusual occurrence. Nor was this notion en-

tirely dispelled on entering the apartment ; for Rosabel, as the door opened, overwhelmed by shame and fear, tacitly turned her back upon the enemy, and, leaning her head upon a chair, vouchsafed neither word nor look to those who thus intruded upon her privacy.

“ There is something quite out of the common in all this,” whispered Mr. Warner in a low tone to a gentleman behind him. “ Don’t you wish you could see her face ?”

“ I do, indeed,” was the reply.

“ Hem—— Be composed, madam.”

No reply.

“ A little sullen, you see ; very symptomatic,” whispered Mr. Warner, aside to the gentleman near him.

Mr. Warner, it must be observed, was a magistrate, and a man of magisterial manners in his own house. He was one who pursued his vocation *con amore*. The whirlwind of contention which carried others away, was to him only a little agreeable zephyr. He excelled in the character of an umpire, and loved to exercise it, whether in a criminal prosecution, or in a domestic broil. His dignity on such occasions was proverbial ; though he

sometimes sullied it, as wiser men have done, by talking too much. In the present instance, however, he felt somewhat embarrassed.

“ I am happy,” he said, after a few moments of profound silence all around him, “ to find, madam, that you are so composed. Don’t be alarmed ; these things will occur with young people. But, Henry—Mr. Belfield—how came you here ? Vastly well, very pretty, young gentlemen : I see how it is ; you have disturbed the young lady”—casting a judicial eye at the open window, and the snow-tracks on the floor. “ Upon my honour, Mr. Belfield, it is not a very agreeable thing for me to remark, that you have forced yourself into this young lady’s presence in a most unbecoming way—most unbecoming.”

“ I am very sorry for it, I assure you, sir,” said Henry Warner, looking down, whilst a smile played for a moment on his countenance. “ It was a sudden thought, and has not been, I assure you, an agreeable enterprize.”

He looked, shiveringly, at the window. Mr. Warner, with his accustomed stateliness, walked up to it, and closed it.

“ It is very strange—I can regulate other

people's matters, and not controul my own family. Out of doors," he added, emphatically, "it is all very well;—there I am obeyed. I will venture to say there is no one conduces more to the peace of the county than myself."

No one disputed the position. The office of Dictator General was indeed supposed to become Mr. Warner well. Twice had he appeased two ladies of the Borough of Cheverton, at a ball, upon the subject of precedence; and recently had even prevented two doctors from fighting over the bed of a patient, who had unluckily called in rivals to his aid, not knowing that Mr. A. would not meet Mr. B., nor Mr. B. prescribe before Mr. A. But to return to the narrative.

"Well, sir," resumed Mr. Warner, "we will not press the penitent too far. 'You are sorry,' you say: you are not come to the House of Correction, Mr. Belfield; we will dismiss that part of the case. Ladies and gentlemen, oblige me by withdrawing down stairs. Henry, make your apologies to Miss Fortescue. I hope he is forgiven."

The young man came forward with great timidity, and stood, not daring to encounter the

offended young lady, waiting in silence for her pardon. Miss Fortescue at this moment did condescend to look round.

“ I will forgive you all,” she said, hastily, “ if you will be kind enough to leave the room.”

“ A most decisive judgment!” exclaimed Mr. Warner ; “ and, considering the lateness of the hour, the best that can be pronounced.”

“ Miss Fortescue,” he continued, as the door closed, and the amused and wondering party disappeared, Martha alone remaining—“ don’t be startled, my dear ; we are not going to sign a mandamus against you. I don’t question the reasons of your coming hither ; the evidence of that bears upon another case. Just now, we are defendants, and you are plaintiff. You have reason to complain of something very much of the nature of trespass ; but, since you have done me the honour of seeking protection in my house, protection you shall have.”

Miss Fortescue, at this speech, took courage to look at her magnanimous protector : she seemed to gain composure by the survey. Mr. Warner was of a thick set, common-place figure, with an open, unfurrowed brow, a full eye, not

very intelligent. He was dressed, for the gala, in a Carmelite-coloured coat, suitable to his magisterial gravity ; a dove-coloured satin waistcoat, made deep, with flaps, according to the mode then prevalent. His black velvet breeches were set off with gold knee-bands. These were the last days of gridiron shoe-buckles : a pair of these, large and luminous, reached nearly down to the worthy magistrate's toes. His hair had been well "tormented," as it was jocularly termed, for the occasion, and was confined, behind, in one of the new-fashioned pig-tails, tightly strapped with black ribbon, and becoming narrower and narrower, until, arriving nearly to a point, it terminated in a slender curl.

"With regard to my son, and his young acquaintance, Miss Fortescue, I am no accomplice. I wipe my hands of it. Holding the prominent situation that I do, and, more especially, being a widower, and having the honour of being known to Sir John, by character, no doubt—"

He waited, in vain, for an assent.

"I have not myself the honour of personally knowing Sir John. The only public affair in which Sir John and I were ever concerned

together, was upon the occasion of his losing a horse. You have heard of it, no doubt ; for it made noise enough at the time."

" Very like, sir," said Martha, from behind ;  
 " but Miss is too young to remember that."

" However, that is nothing to the point. Sir John, I dare say, knows me, although I do not know him ; and allow me to observe, that you much remind me of your father, Miss Fortescue ;—I never saw Sir John but once, and that was at the quarter sessions. We were widowers, I think, about the same time."

" Miss Rosa favours her mother," whispered Martha, in a low tone, from behind.

" 'That may be true, Martha," said Mr. Warner, turning round somewhat sharply ;  
 " Miss Rosabel Fortescue may favour both her parents, the living and the defunct. However, business is business, madam," he again resumed, " and must be done. It is not for me to enquire into family dissensions, or family matters—but—"

Another pause ensued ; and the grave, discouraging manner of the young lady seemed to say : " it is not for you to enquire."

" Indeed, it would be improper," he con-

tinued, after some hesitation, "seeing that all you can urge would be *ex parte* evidence, and therefore by no means allowable when such respectable persons as Sir John Fortescue and Mrs. Waldegrave are concerned."

"Miss Rosa, I am sure," interposed Martha, "would say nothing but what was the truth, sir."

"Sir John, madam, I presume, knows of your absence?" said Mr. Warner, to Rosabel.

"No, sir."

"No? Then I shall deem it my especial duty to acquaint him of it, and to interdict you, Martha, from forwarding his young lady's notions of flight, under pain of a summons to answer for your conduct. My friend Captain Ashbrook lives in your neighbourhood, Miss Rosabel; and I shall depute him to make your worthy father aware of your present position within a very few hours." And, thus saying, he quitted the apartment.

## CHAPTER III.

“ Did he break out into tears ?

In great measure.

—— More of him anon.”—SHAKESPEARE.

SIR JOHN FORTESCUE and Mr. Warner, as the latter remarked, had become widowers, and about the same period ; but with very different consequences to the happiness of both. Lady Fortescue had been one of those lovely, easy, careless beings who are born to be married young, to have, and to spoil, large families. She lived long enough to lavish, without show, and by mere carelessness and mismanagement, Sir John's not too ample means ; to see daughters as lovely as herself growing up into young women, without a single useful habit, or serious idea ; to experience the stings of misconduct and of disobedience in her eldest son ; to leave three noisy younger children, of various ages,

and of tempers peculiarly combustible, to the management of a husband truly disconsolate.

Mrs. Warner, on the contrary, had been a thrifty, hardy woman, whom no slight disease could have carried off. She had “looked after her children,” as it is called, to the very last moment—been up early and late, and had gone on teaching and stitching till the day before her death; and had the glory of being considered regularly worn out by duties which any servant might have done for her. Her last action was hemming a cravat for Mr. Warner. She left the reputation of having been indeed a loss to her family; and Mr. Warner enjoyed that of being a most inconsolable husband—his grief, however, was not of that uncomfortable sort which shuns observation and sympathy: it was the theme of the neighbourhood, and was suitable to a man who lived so much in public. He had been “such a pattern” when a husband; and he was now no less a pattern when a widower. His grief was always in full dress.

Sir John Fortescue’s sufferings, on the other hand, had been borne in silence and patience, and, after the first awful shock was over, were invisible, except to the solicitous and expe-

rienced eye of friendship. He had walked into the small parish church, the Sunday week after Lady Fortescue's funeral, conducting his eldest daughter to the head of the pew, her mother's former place, followed by his numerous family, some of whom were too young to know their loss: and once he had looked round at the funeral decorations of the church with unaltered eye; and the servants, and lookers on, and even his children, had wondered at his composure: but in the silent hours of the night, when others slept, Martha, the old nurse, would hear the bereaved mourner, her master, pace up and down his solitary apartment, and abandon himself to the anguish of hopeless and heartfelt grief.

Sir John Fortescue had, however, ample cause for exertion, to rouse him from the sorrow of a refined and sensitive mind—for such he possessed. He found his family affairs disordered, and his family ungovernable. A domestic democracy prevailed; each in his own place was an independent member of the community. The children were alternately slaves and rebels under this too common species of government. The charm of Lady Fortescue's

manners, her frequent ill health, the grace which she knew how to throw over the social board, her blind fondness for her children, and her candour, and sweetness of character, had all gilded over her defects of management to her husband's view. When living, he could scarcely bear to blame her, or even in thought to reproach her pernicious indulgence as the source of much irremediable mischief; when dead, he could not endure to cast a momentary reflection upon her memory, even to himself. He blamed his own negligence, and regretted that Parliamentary duties and other public affairs had drawn him too frequently away from home. He resolved to relinquish all such occupations as would interfere with his duty to his family; and he determined to resort to aid upon which he could rely, to assist him in the controul of his younger children.

Immediately after Lady Fortescue's death, Mrs. Evelyn, her only sister, had arrived at Hales Hall, to take a temporary charge of the family: but her situation in life prevented her from continuing to preside over her unruly young relatives. She had married, at the age of thirty, a clergyman of excellent character,

but of valetudinarian habits; and, although their union had not been blessed with children, yet the care of Mr. Evelyn's health, comforts, and repasts, and the superintendence, morally and corporeally, of a poor and extended parish, were ample and important occupations for Mrs. Evelyn. She remained, therefore, only a short time at Hales Hall; retiring to give place to Sir John's two sisters, but leaving in the hearts of her nieces and nephews a fond recollection of her more than parental—her Christian care of them, and a regret for her departure which subsequent events tended strongly to confirm.

She was succeeded by Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Fortescue. Mrs. Waldegrave was a widow, without children, a sort of variegated old maid; her angular points of character were all sharpened by a brief endurance of the yoke of matrimony. Mr. Waldegrave had left her somewhat poorer and prouder than he had found her: she was one of those rigidly right, harshly pious, and disagreeably good persons who acquire credit, without conciliating affection. Her religion had none of the benignant warmth, the diffusive cheerfulness, the generosity, the loveliness of Christianity; it was that of ob-

servances, of rules, of dogmas, of self-approbation, and of unrelenting condemnation of those who differed from her. The leaven of old superstition clung about her; she still placed too much reliance upon the "tithe of mint, anise, and cummin," and too little importance upon the spirit, without which those tributes were without value. Her mode of religious instruction partook of this error. She liked so many services to be said, so many collects to be learned, so many hymns to be repeated. The deep conviction of the heart was a secondary question.

The source of all true virtue being vitiated, Mrs. Waldegrave's notions may be easily estimated. That "charity which begins—and stays at home" she could perfectly well understand. To have a proper sense of one's own rights, to cultivate a due contempt for others, to steel one's heart against any melting sympathies with the erring, always to blame the unfortunate, always to pay court to the prosperous,—these were her leading, if not avowed, rules of conduct.

Aunt Alice, as the children called her, was a weak echo of Mrs. Waldegrave, upon whose

stronger judgment she implicitly relied, and from whose decisions she considered there was no appeal. She was, as the Scotch say, like "the gowk to the titling," or, in good Saxon, like the hedge-sparrow and the cuckoo: her actions were all imitative of her more wily sister. The language, demeanour, and actions of the one were the pattern for the other. But, as the stronger qualities of Mrs. Waldegrave were diluted by a touch of imbecility in Aunt Alice, Mrs. Waldegrave's pride shone forth in Aunt Alice in the form of a little petulant variety, or was ridiculously obtrusive and boastful. But to return from this slight sketch to the main subject of my history.

It may readily be conceived, that a family, hitherto blindly indulged, were not likely readily to bend to the iron rule of these two ladies. Charlotte, the eldest, of weak health, and not over-strong understanding, did indeed, after many tears, and a few attempts at sullenness, succumb to a yoke which was less repulsive to her, than to the high-spirited Rosabel, who had as yet, in the expressive language of her brothers, "cared for no one." Rosabel had been hitherto looked upon as one of those

wild animals which never can be tamed ; she had almost governed her mother, and quite governed her sister Charlotte ; had won many a trophy in battle from her brothers ; and resisted, with indomitable spirit, the usurpations of servants and governesses. Of her father she knew nothing ; for hitherto, when he had been at home, he had liked his ease and pleasure, and had been contented to see a smiling, healthy family around him, without enquiring minutely into their mental and moral condition ; a trait in his otherwise irreproachable conduct, for which he was doomed to experience the severest retribution.

During the interregnum over which Mrs. Evelyn had presided, affairs had gone on much in the same way. Servants had domineered, boys had fought, governesses dozed over their lessons, Charlotte had been passive, Rosabel had been spoiled. But, when Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Fortescue held the reins of government, a reform bill was quickly framed, introduced, and carried through the house. As in public establishments, sinecures were abolished, salaries reduced, pensions struck off, accounts regulated, the consumption of articles

restrained. All this was admirable, however the malcontents might complain of favoritism, as is their wont in other more important institutions ; and although it might be rumoured that the humbler and really laborious placemen were reduced, whilst the higher offices were left untouched. Still, however, the motive for retrenchment was excellent ; the necessity indubitable ; the results, it might be hoped, would be efficacious ; and Sir John felt the more obliged to his sisters for their exertions, because he deemed the nature of those efforts to be disagreeable. But in this he was mistaken. Mrs. Waldegrave enjoyed power, luxuriated in humbling the humble, revelled in cavilling at an account, and rejoiced in the dignity of being feared. Aunt Alice was glad that the maids were not allowed to wear lappets, or high necks, “ they were coming to such a pass ;” and was particularly happy that her nieces were no longer unrestricted as to silk stockings. Such extravagance as reigned at Hales Hall she had never witnessed before.

These preliminary matters being arranged, then were the unhappy younger members to be enthralled and tutored. Charlotte was soon

caught and incaged, and, like a bullfinch, made to sing only the song she was taught. The elder boys were always at school or at college, or in other occupations. The little children, by means of removing their former attendants, by daily intimidation, the use of a closet dungeon, banishment to a noon-day bed, seclusion from all happiness, half dinners, whole lectures, poetry, spelling, and other inflictions, were soon subdued, if not improved. They crept about, and looked pitifully at the eye which had a glance of mercy—came into the dining room, marshalled, a little corps of good children, with their bows and curtsies. The sound of the battledore, and the top, the loud laugh, the treble notes of infantile delight, were heard no more. Hunt the slipper was obsolete; blind man's buff was vulgar. It was not lady-like to run, nor like a gentleman to laugh and romp. Monitory sounds were now heard along the broad sunny terrace-walk, instead of the jest, and the halloo of thoughtless merriment. The little Fortescues, in spite of nature, and early education, were actually becoming genteel,—and miserable.—But Rosabel, with her dark flashing eye, her gait of pride, and her rebel-

lious heart, was still unsubdued. Hitherto her fair, open brow had been seldom clouded by sorrow, nor even by anger ; for life had been all a sunny day to her. Her transports of passion had been evanescent ; for her character was not one which could retain injuries. She had prized, and tyrannized over her sisters ; and loved, and quarrelled with her brothers. She had scarce known contradiction, nor opposition ; and was ill calculated to encounter that controul over every minute action, that fastidious investigation into every motive and feeling, which the sway of Mrs. Waldegrave had introduced. At first, Rosabel stormed and fretted, and returned reproach for reproach, and taunt for taunt ; then her young spirits were bowed down by dejection, and the calousness of despair came over her. Still, however, she was inflexible ; and it was after renewed causes of irritation had fired her into fresh resolution, that she adopted the rash step, the circumstances of which have already been detailed.

## CHAPTER IV.

“ My mother,—when I heard that thou wast dead,  
Say,—wast thou conscious of the tears I shed ?”

COWPER.

EARLY on a frosty morning, two days after Rosabel's elopement, Sir John Fortescue's carriage was seen driving up to the door of Mr. Warner's house. Rosabel, as she stood, finishing her morning toilet attire, could command, from a little window which looked sideways upon the principal entrance to the house, a view of Mrs. Waldegrave, stepping out, tall and straight as a Scotch pine, independently, without seeming to notice the aid which was offered her by her own footman, or by Mr. Warner's servant, who ran out upon the steps at the sound of the carriage wheels. Rosabel's very heart was chilled, as she observed her Aunt Alice creeping out after Mrs. Walde-

grave, and, in imitation of her prototype, march into the house with an air of as much dignity as the cold blasts, which cramped every limb at this early hour, could permit her to assume. They looked like the proper accompaniments of the season—cold, biting, comfortless.

“They are come, Martha, in full force,” said Rosabel,—“to take me home, I suppose; must I go?”

“Didn’t you promise me last night, Miss Rosa? and was not Captain Ashbrook to make the old ladies understand that not a word was to be said to you if you did go? That was agreed upon, you know.”

“True,” groaned Rosabel—her youthful imagination heightened by her hatred of her Aunts; “but, depend upon it, Martha, I shall be immured, with Aunt Alice to watch me, no doubt. I know you will never see me again; I shall be shut up in Aunt Waldegrave’s dressing room—any where but there!—or sent, perhaps, in banishment to Drayfield.”

“Never, while Martha lives,” said the old nurse, weeping. “Now I know all, I shall take care that Sir John knows it too.”

“What would my poor dear mama say, Martha, if she were alive?” pursued Rosabel, who was now in tears also.—“Her being ever alive,—my ever having had any one that loved me so, seems to me now all a dream. And her death seems to me a dream too. Don’t you remember, Martha, when poor little Howard was born, how you told me to sit in the lobby, and listen by the door, and that by and bye I should hear a new brother or sister cry? And I did hear it; and the sounds of rejoicing, and the bustle of footsteps too. Ah, Martha, can I ever forget what followed?—Suddenly there was a stillness—I listen’d, I went close to the door—I heard nothing—not a footstep—and, after a time, you came out, with the infant in your arms—but, ah! how still mama’s room was!—and I never heard her voice again.”

She covered her face with her hands, and, with the old nurse, wept bitterly.

“It seems to me, Martha, that I never really grieved for mama till now,” said Rosabel, raising her head—“when I think what must be my life at home.”

“Ah! poor dear my lady,” interposed Mar-

tha, sighing deeply ; “ what would she say to it indeed ? ”

“ I shall beg of them to let me go to Aunt Evelyn.”

“ That they will not do, dear Miss Rosa ; there has always been a jealousy.”

“ I shall beg of them to let me go to school.”  
—“ And then you would run away again,” said Martha : “ school would never do for you, Miss Rosa.”

But now their conversation was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of a servant, who came to summon them down stairs.

Mrs. Waldegrave and Mr. Warner had, by this time, thawed into something like a friendly footing—a circumstance to be ascribed to the deferential reception which the two sisters had encountered from the Magistrate. As he happened to be the only member of his family, except the servants, down stairs, he stepped forth, at the sound of carriage wheels, on the scent for an event of some nature ; and an event in the country is a blessing to the active-minded, even if it be not altogether of an agreeable nature : still there is a great deal in having

something to do. Mr. Warner, with a tact habitual to a man accustomed to business, quickly discerned the object of Mrs. Waldegrave's visit, and had made no inconsiderable progress in that lady's good opinion, when Rosabel, followed by Martha, entered the apartment.

As the heroine of this little romance, or farce, or melodrama, whichever my readers may please to consider it, afterwards learned, a neighbour of Sir John's, Captain Ashbrook, lately returned from abroad, had undertaken to make an arrangement with her aunts, in case of her being restored to her home. The most positive promise had been obtained that no reproaches, nor even admonitions, except from Sir John Fortescue himself, should ensue upon the return of the young fugitive ; and this promise had preceded the disclosure of her retreat, which was made upon that condition only ; Captain Ashbrook then revealing that he had accidentally seen her on the preceding evening. Mrs. Waldegrave was therefore obliged to restrain her natural fluency upon the subject of delinquencies, and to incur the penalty of being constrained to adopt that inge-

nious mode of correcting an offender generally known by the phrase of "talking at" a person.

"Good morning, Miss Rosabel; good day, Martha; I hope you are quite well;" with a look that seemed to say, 'I hate the very sight of you.' "Yes, Mr. Warner, as we were observing, young gentlewomen in our day had not these notions; they were to be seen, not heard: I never remember addressing my father, Sir Hubert Fortescue, in my life, until first spoken to"—

"Very good indeed, exactly the order in which I keep my own family," replied Mr. Warner: "you know we are used to deference in the justice-room.—I have not the honor of remembering Sir Hubert, I am not long of this county; but have understood that he was a gentleman of an excellent reputation."

"Our family," observed Mrs. Waldegrave, "is not of yesterday; and you may suppose, Mr. Warner, how obnoxious it must be to *us*, who have never known the breath of slander but by its affecting others,—how obnoxious it must be to have a sort of stigma attaching to us, through the misconduct of any member of Sir John's family."

“The remark is too just,” observed Mr. Warner, shaking his head; “I don’t know myself that I had ever a more unpleasant difference to settle than that which you hint at, being more accustomed to legislate for young gentlemen than young ladies; but”—

“We will waive the subject, Mr. Warner, if you please.—You were alluding to Sir Hubert: he was one of the most exact men in the world; a man who took the most exact order in his affairs; a great scholar, and lived, and, I may say,—died, with the ‘Whole duty of Man’ under his pillow.”

“Poor man!” said Henry Warner to himself, for he had crept into the room, and stood peeping over his father’s shoulder, full of curiosity.

“I ring for my carriage, if you please, Mr. Warner.—Young people, now-a-days, think all sober reading dull; and I assure you, Mr. Warner, I have heard certain young ladies apply that term to the holy and excellent work in question: not that I object to some species of entertainment:—there are Mrs. Rowe’s ‘Letters from the Dead to the Living,’ very pretty reading, and what a lady ought to read: as for

history, which my father was not fond of for young ladies, I don't think exactly we should be content, Mr. Warner, like certain young ladies that I know, to take it all from Shakespeare's plays. Sir Hubert used to say, 'Study your duty, girls, first;' and, after that, he made no exceptions to easy reading.—But I lose time. Sir John will probably be by this hour returned, and will be expecting us home.—Miss Rosabel, we see you first, if you please: nay, but you must fain be content to receive Martha's last wishes of duty here; I wish you your health, Martha; Mr. Warner, good day; and should you ever"—

"Oh! I will make it my business to call upon Sir John," exclaimed the worthy magistrate.

"I should be sorry for you to give yourself that trouble," said Mrs. Waldegrave haughtily; "seeing that my brother is so seldom at Hales Hall: Sir John will, I am sure, make a point of writing to you. Sister Alice, I attend your pleasure; good day, Mr. Warner; good day, young gentleman:" and, without condescending to turn her head to the right, or to the left, as she uttered these adieux, Mrs. Waldegrave

entered her carriage, and drove off, sitting erect, in stern encounter with the unhappy Rosabel, who was planted, in deep dejection, on the back seat, directly opposite to her elder aunt.

The short journey, only seven miles, was made in total silence. Mrs. Waldegrave looked out of one window, Miss Alice out of the other. Vickey, Mrs. Waldegrave's dog, with a comforter round his throat, stood up on the seat between them, keeping his sharp, tri-cornered eyes fixed upon Rosabel all the time ; she, poor girl, wishing every moment that she could open the carriage door, and make her escape. But they drew near home, and other feelings besides anger, and dislike, began to possess her mind.

Hales Hall, the family seat of the Fortescues, was in a style of architecture peculiar to this country, during the latter period of the last century. It was built of genuine red brick, roofed with tiles of actual blue, and decorated down its various compartments with narrow facings of stone. Its whole appearance suggested the notion rather of comfort, than of elegance or splendour, though it extended over no

inconsiderable portion of ground, and was composed of a substantial-looking centre, and two wings, which, like most wings, whether of seraph or cherub, that I have seen, appeared to encumber the main body. It stood well, on a gentle eminence, partly covered with wood, and the near approach to it was embellished by extensive and highly cultivated pleasure-grounds, in which Lady Fortescue had taken great delight.

Rosabel, nurtured within the walls of this modern edifice, had, with a girlish tincture of romance, often regretted that her grandfather, Sir Hubert, should have pulled down, in the spirit of what is called improvement, the old house, the real Hales Hall, and erected this spacious dwelling in its stead. Like Camden, she would "have restored antiquity to England, and England to antiquity." A small drawing of the house of her ancestors hung in her father's library; and its gable ends, odd-looking corners, cumbrous chimneys, and decorated doorway, were much to Rosabel's fancy. The park, however, was old; the elm which grew on the grass-plot before the house was old, the thorns which grew on the slope were old, even

the swans on the pools were as old as swans could be; and the pictures, and books, and other appendages to the ordinary furniture, were of sufficient age to gratify the spirits of Stowe, or Leland, or Strype, or any other of those old porers into the dusty corners of antiquity, had those worthy gentlemen been in existence.

It so happened that Sir John had reached home, before the party had returned from Fairford; and Rosabel, to her dismay, saw him pacing up and down in apparent anxiety, along a little by-walk among the trees, apart from the observance of public curiosity.

In spite of her natural courage, she trembled, for her father was not a person whose rebukes could be met with indifference. Hitherto she had never experienced anything like severity from his hands; he had merely been held up to her as the last resort in cases of extra disobedience: an appeal to him was the *ne plus ultra* of punishment, and she knew not how she could encounter his frown.

Nothing is so soon perceived as one's own disgrace; the "altered eye" of the very menial proclaimed it to Rosabel; and she read, in

the grave and silent mode of rendering such services as were indispensable, that she was received at home as a culprit; that the ban of Mrs. Waldegrave, of Aunt Alice, and of Sir John's displeasure, was issued against her. This was, however, a minor grief; indeed it roused her to indignation; but the flush of angry pride died away upon her cheek, when she saw a little assembly of her younger sisters and brother at the extremity of the hall, attracted from their usual haunts by the sound of the carriage, draw back as she approached, and look timorously at their aunts, without offering to run forward and kiss her. Howard indeed, poor little innocent, held out his arms for her to take him in hers; and, oh! how fond, and how fervent were the caresses which for a few minutes she gave him, until Mrs. Waldegrave's stern "Take him away, nurse," recalled her to herself; and Rosabel was summoned away, being informed by a servant that Sir John required her immediate attendance in the library.

Sir John was seated when she entered, having entered the house by a different way. Rosabel had scarcely strength to close the door after her; the voice of her father, when he

commanded her to do so, made her start, although the sound was by no means a loud, or an angry one. She knew not what she expected, nor how to demean herself.

Previously to the interview, she had determined to tell her father all her grievances, and troubles, and to throw herself on his mercy ; but now she had not a word to say, an idea to impel her to speak.

Sir John was a grave man, and a proud man, and a little deaf. He had never cultivated the affections of his children, and he scarcely knew whether they had hearts or not. Of one thing he had always been assured, that Rosabel had far less feeling, more violence of character, and about a hundred more faults than her elder sister. Since his sisters had come to reside with him, he had been perpetually incited to lecture, correct, and humble poor Rosabel ; but he knew not how it was ; there was something so open and guileless about the poor girl,—her air was so frank, her step so bounding, her laugh so joyous, that he could not bear to check what he thought might be innocent happiness, by unnecessary severity.

Upon the present occasion, he had well con-

sidered his conduct. He was shocked and harassed beyond measure by the imprudent step she had taken ; but he did not—what parent does ?—consider his child's character as depraved beyond remedy ; and he saw, or suspected, that severity had done its utmost : some new plan must be adopted,—perhaps kindness ; it was quite an innovation on the order of things, but it might be tried.

After some minutes' parley with himself, Sir John turned to address his daughter. He had a dark and somewhat stern eye, and the contour of his brow, and of his aquiline features, was austere ; but there was a softness in his voice as he said :

“ Rosabel, draw near,—give me your hand ;—I say nothing to you respecting what you have done, because—I am sure that, if you could have guessed the pain it has caused me, you would not have done it.”

Rosabel sank at her father's feet ; she clung even to his knees ; she kissed again and again the proffered hand ; she threw herself into his arms.

These were silent indications of repentance,

but of a repentance “not to be repented of;” they were the first dawnings of actual filial affection ; the first assurances of filial duty ; and the silent pledge thus given, was sacred.

## CHAPTER V.

“ How would you be,  
 If he, which is the top of judgment, should  
 But judge you as you are ? O, think on that.”  
 MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

HAPPILY for Rosabel, the corrective process which the world sooner or later inflicts, began, in her case, at an early period, to chasten and strengthen her character ; and she ceased to be a creature of impulse merely, before she had arrived at that season of life when errors of judgment, and the indulgence of misguided inclination, become of vital consequence to our happiness, or welfare.

It was not until now, that her father had established in her heart the first principle of an attachment towards himself on her part, not merely instinctive. She had found him lenient, when she expected him to be severe ; she had met with his forgiveness, when she knew that she merited banishment from his presence.

She now began, for the first time, to feel that his good opinion was necessary to the continuance of her own self-complacency, and, consequently, to her comfort. Neglected, and even, in petty instances, oppressed, Rosabel was grateful for small favours; in this respect differing from most persons of her age, who, generally partaking of the goods of life without trouble or forethought, know not how to appreciate them until the variations of capricious human nature, or the changes and chances of life, have taught them gratitude to the few, from whom disinterested kindness is to be expected. Accustomed also to solitude, for Charlotte prudently shunned the contagion of her scape-grace sister, Rosabel was also romantic. She was prone to the working of that exploded good, or evil genius, as it may be considered, enthusiasm. This was, she knew, a vital defect in Mrs. Waldegrave's sight; and she carefully concealed her cherished failings—yet it sustained her, and the objects of her enthusiasm were innocent, and lofty, and holy.

In the first place, her love of nature rendered solitude less irksome to her, than it would have been for the careless observer,

or the systematic reasoner, whose actions are "ruled with a ruler\*." And with regard to her enthusiasm for individuals, she had two objects: of these, her father was undoubtedly the first; but she had another, also from motives of gratitude, in the neighbour of Sir John Fortescue, Captain Ashbrook, the only son of a gentleman of large property in the county.

Captain Ashbrook was, as she understood, the kind-hearted mediator who had undertaken to treat with her aunts in her behalf, and who had done it so effectually, that she was not only suffered to bear her disgrace in silence, on her return home, but to all appearance reinstated in her usual condition, with some amelioration as to the independance of her actions. Rosabel had never, to her knowledge, seen Captain Ashbrook, but he was a man of high character, young, accomplished, brave, and, about this time, to add to the interest, he had again sailed to join his regiment in America. Rosabel heard of general regrets for his absence, and expressions of admiration for the short, but brilliant military career which his life, from the age of twenty, to that of twenty-

\* Elia.

seven, had presented. And now, he had gone to join the gallant Sir Henry Clinton at New York. In the course of this year, the newspapers announced that the forts of Montgomery and Clinton had been reduced. Captain Ashbrook had accompanied General Clinton from New York, and had distinguished himself in the perilous but brilliant enterprize, brilliant at least in comparison with those which had preceded it, and the more extolled in consequence. They had sailed up Hudson's river; and Rosabel, who had all her life abjured study, began to apply to geography.—Captain Ashbrook was left in the garrison in one of the captured forts. Several of the neighbouring families had sons, or brothers, or nephews, engaged in the disastrous contentions with America; but none had as yet obtained any military fame, or been mentioned in the private dispatches with so much distinction as Captain Ashbrook. 'This was the period (1777) when England began to find that her exhausted resources were indeed failing her, and that able men, willing for the contest, were now to be sought in the higher and middling classes, not yet thinned by the repeated slaughters which had

reduced our forces in an alarming degree. Volunteer corps were raised, many gentlemen of honourable families acting in them as privates.

Thus, a spirit of military adventure was generally diffused; and whilst the contest with America, contending, as she doubtless was, with England under the "masked battery of France," was still reprobated by reflective and discerning persons, the gallantry with which it was carried on, on both sides, and the deep stake which the country had in the contest, a stake not only consisting in political interests, but vested in the sons, the brothers, the husbands of those peacefully at home, gave to the military character an importance fostered by our best affections.

Rosabel, therefore, felt even some degree of pride that the gallant Captain Ashbrook, with whose praises nearly all the county rang, should have concerned himself in one so lowly, although it was on an occasion little likely to impress him with much respect for her memory. He had also said some kind and palliative things of her in other quarters, and avowed an interest in her future welfare, maintaining, in a party at Mr.

Warner's, as Rosabel learned from Martha, in a subsequent interview with her former nurse, that such flights of fancy as Rosabel had displayed were not indicative of future delinquency. This was a doctrine too agreeable to her, and its assertion was too kindly meant, not to render Captain Ashbrook, for the time, the favourite hero of Rosabel's imagination, that *beau ideal* of excellence which every romantic girl frames to herself, and which is seldom personified in one of their own sex. Meantime, a year slid away. Rosabel's education, as it was called, proceeded much in the usual mode with young ladies in the country of that period. She had all her life resolutely opposed herself to tuition, and had struck out her own mode of study. Instructors were at that time scarce; and such as there were, but indifferent. From the organist at Shrewsbury the Misses Fortescue picked up a jingling of music, which they were but too happy to abandon at a later period of life: Rosabel had, indeed, a wild, careless way of singing of her own, and, as her voice was sweet and clear, Sir John, as he sometimes heard her untaught notes in the shrubbery, and listened to her warbling away snatches of old tunes to

Howard, thought, with a father's partiality, that it was well enough. Besides this, and a little French, and a little embroidery, and a little dancing, taught by three itinerant professors, who each came once a quarter, very little instruction was imparted; and the solid branches of education might be acquired by accident, or they might be omitted altogether. From her youth upwards, Rosabel, in particular, had set spelling at defiance, detested grammar, and never could be taught accounts.

Thus, unemployed as their minds were, the sisters ripened into womanhood: both, according to general estimation, entitled, by personal appearance, to become County Belles; both decided contrasts to each other in every attribute. Charlotte methodical, but shallow—prudent, but devoid of talent—indifferent to any sort of cultivation—and not over-stocked with sensibility. Rosabel, with desultory habits, and quick feelings; not averse to intellectual improvement, if she knew how to set about it. As imprudent as any human being could be, credulous, and reckless; perhaps, not really so fond of admiration as Charlotte; but, to all appearance, far less anxious to retire from it in public. Attractive, if not

strictly beautiful, she was, of all persons, most calculated, at this early season of her life, to be admired by the one sex, and to be disliked and depreciated by the other.

Meantime, she was verging to the completion of her seventeenth year, little noticed, and, apparently, little prized by any one, when an accident disclosed to her that her father was not so indifferent to her happiness as she, at one time, conceived. She was prone, like all girls of an imaginative turn, to desultory reading—a taste, under Mrs. Waldegrave's jurisdiction, not very easily indulged. Sir John's smaller library, however, was encumbered with books in delightful confusion, so that a volume or two of Molière—translated, alas! of course, for Rosabel,—or of the Spectator,—or Bell's Theatre,—or any other of those forbidden hoards of miscellaneous amusement which the young love to rummage, half forgetting, half digesting, what they read,—or even a novel or two,—could not, in the plenitude of disorder, be readily missed.

Rosabel, ignorant as she was, had little regard to time or place, when once her attention was riveted by the sort of reading she

loved. She was immersed, one afternoon, in Addison's exquisite tale of Theodore and Constantia, in which the interest rests upon one incident alone. She had read to that part, where, after years of separation, and changed in all but their mutual attachment,—disguised by conventual attire,—shackled by conventual vows,—they meet again—the confessor and the confessing;—at that moment of interest, her father's step and voice broke even that illusion: she was not in the confessional with Theodore; but in a retired nook of the library, a small apartment, which, for warmth, was parted from the principal room by a green curtain. The curtain was, fortunately, at this moment drawn across.

“ Sister,” said Sir John Fortescue, somewhat sternly, “ what is the use of reviving these things? Let all recollection of them be avoided. The world, Penelope, will be glad enough to revive such early delinquencies, if her own family are not determined, altogether, to dispel them from recollection.”

“ Yes, brother,” Mrs. Waldegrave began; “ but in case of Miss Fortescue's being introduced—of course, Rosa is not to come out at

present—and, poor thing, had she not better still continue dining with the governess, in regard to four o'clock being a late hour for her tender years?"

"Indeed, sister, I doubt it. Rosa is old enough to behave herself at table; and, if a taste for good society be not given her, she will take to that which is beneath her."

"Very likely," replied Mrs. Waldegrave.

—Rosabel could fancy the shake of the head which accompanied those two words.

"People will be glad enough to revive the remembrance of her early follies, sister, if we do not show that they are forgotten at home," said Sir John.

"That is uncommonly true," observed weak Aunt Alice, intending to aid her sister, but navigating, as she always did, without compass. "If you had heard Mrs. Goodyer, the other day:—'Miss Rosabel quite well, and at home just now?'"

"It is of little use, Alice, to mark such idle inuendoes. Rosabel, indeed, is likely to give me trouble enough"—

Sir John spoke in a tone which went to Rosabel's heart.

“ With regard to Charlotte,” he continued, “ I feel not the least uneasiness ; her docility—her self-command—her dutiful conduct to her aunts.” (Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice bowed assent to each of these clauses).—“ Charlotte is sure to do well. But Rosa is wilful, yet gifted”—

“ I am glad,” thought Rosabel, “ I have some sort of merit.”

—“ Engaging, but thoughtless and uncertain ; and, since the world,” continued Sir John, little thinking who listened to him,—“ since the world accords her the meed of personal charms, although I own I see it not” (fathers are so dull)—“ I cannot but anticipate for her many temptations—”

“ To which she will but too readily give ear,” croaked Mrs. Waldegrave.

“ And snares—”

“ Which her own folly will make for her.”

But at this critical part of the conversation, Sir John was suddenly called off.

“ I am certainly highly flattered,” thought Rosabel, when, upon finding the coast clear, she emerged from her hiding place : “ but my father—my kind, yet harsh—affectionate, yet

austere, father—shall not find his Rosabel so wilful, vain, and ill-fated a being as he has set her down for. No, Aunt Waldegrave—no, Aunt Alice ; I mean to be something better than either of you yet. With many, many thanks for your good opinion of me.”

Charlotte and Rosabel had hitherto enjoyed as few opportunities of good society, or of forming any acquaintance with the world, as they had of improving their minds, or of cultivating their tastes. The circle proper for them to visit in the neighbourhood, was, according to the Waldegrave code, extremely limited ; and the circumstances to be taken into account, in forming that circle, were station and family connection entirely : education, character, manners, acquirements, were not to be put in the balance. The number of a man's acres was of far more importance than the number of his virtues. It is natural to expect that all old possessors of the soil, mingling, as they usually do, in the same class, should have notions of this sort ; nor are these notions and distinctions entirely to be deprecated, whilst they preserve them from degrading marriages, or from low associates. It is only the illiterate and the

narrow-minded who carry them to an absurd extent ; the cultivated and the benevolent know how to discriminate : and, in the present day, there is a generous deference, on the part of rank, to talent, and to merit of all kinds, which has obliterated the invidiousness of distinctions, and which must benefit all ranks. But this would have been quite incomprehensible to Mrs. Waldegrave, whose mind, if she had any mind, consisted in a series of prejudices, which she called reasons.

The war had robbed the country of most of its young men ; and boys, of too tender age to take an active part in the world, or elderly gentlemen, constituted the bulk of male society. In the shooting season, however, there was generally an influx of visitants ; some of them young men, who passed a week or two at Hales Hall, as their fathers or uncles had done before them. It was upon these expected arrivals, and upon another event, which was indeed an event, as Mrs. Waldegrave said, that the two affectionate aunts, whose partialities for their elder niece amounted to a sort of domestic party spirit, expatiated, in secret conference, one September morning.

## CHAPTER VI.

“ Many are the sayings of the wise,  
Extolling patience as the truest fortitude,  
And to the bearing well of all calamities.”

MILTON.

“ YOU know, sister, that the Captain is come back, and Ashbrook House all astir ; the old gentleman’s death has brought him back, upon leave of absence : but he was not in time to see his father, who had lived at Bath for years.”

Thus spoke Aunt Alice, as she turned out a large bundle of patch-work, from time immemorial her occupation ; one of those interminable pieces of work which never seem to grow any larger.

“ Well—and how long is the Captain to stay ? He likes Ashbrook ; his father never did. He will be thinking of marriage now—the heir of Medlicote—it is quite a duty.”

Mrs. Waldegrave had just wound up half a year’s accounts as she spoke ; for she had acted,

in that respect, as her own, or rather as Sir John's, housekeeper, since her accession to office. She looked at the sum total—an unpleasant prospect sometimes. “Sir John's expenses are very great,” she said, with a sigh—“and all these children to be suitably provided for!”

“Oh, Charlotte is certain to marry,” observed Aunt Alice, stitching away.

“Probably—only men are frightened at large families. Captain Ashbrook, for instance, might not like to marry the whole family. And then Rosabel puts herself so forward.”—She glanced again at the accounts. “What a sum for haberdashery, and tailory!—and to think that these girls must, and ought to be, presented when they go to London: Miss Fortescue at any rate. She would be the first of the Fortescues who had not been—if she is not.”

“The barley-corn satins are coming in,” resumed Aunt Alice, working away.

“And then! at my brother's death, if the family consequence is to be kept up, the younger brothers and sisters must all be beggars!”

“And if it comes to that,” said Aunt Alice, “they will never marry. I might, as you

know, sister, have been settled in life over and over again, if—”

“ Yes !” answered Mrs. Waldegrave, sharply, “ that’s an old story !” For she was aware of certain, never-dying, feminine weaknesses, on the subject of marriage, clinging to her sister’s character, like parasitic plants to ancient stems ; and the story of the Hon. Mr. B. who had been “ off,” as it is called, because he and Aunt Alice could not make up five hundred a year between them, was indeed, to her, an old story.

“ He will never think of Rosabel ; but Charlotte he might,” she went on saying to herself. —“ Even shoe-leather—what a sum for that !—and the mending is as much as the making !”

“ Well, I hope he will not chuse Rosabel, if he does think of marrying,” dropped from Aunt Alice’s lips by way of soliloquy.

Independent of dislike to the one, and partiality to the other, the point of seniority was a fixed principle in Mrs. Waldegrave’s mind.

“ No one will think of Miss Rosabel, while Miss Fortescue is in the way,” she said, sternly.

“ Yet Lady Lovaine, sister—and you know her to be a judge—Lady Lovaine said, loud

enough for Rosabel to hear—and the girl is already vain enough—‘Rosabel will throw her elder sister into the shade.’ I declare it made me quite ill to hear her say so—so different as it used to be between you and me, Penelope.”

“My Lady has her whims, though a very extraordinary, superior woman.”

“An extremely clever woman,” returned Aunt Alice. “Poor dear Mr. Beaufort! notwithstanding his disappointment—for he would have it she broke it all off!—would allow it was for the best!—Heigho!”

“Younger brothers ought not to think of marriage, except with heiresses, Alice.”

“—And now, indeed, he cannot,” returned Aunt Alice, mournfully; “for he’s speechless—his right side went first—it is the third stroke, Lady Lovaine says—the very first news she told me yesterday.—Dear me!”

“How very good of her ladyship to take such an interest in him!—But I am afraid, Alice, she will think it very unkind in us—(just see! the very article of pins—hair pins, minikins, and knitting pins—they may well talk of pin-money!)—that very item is frightful. She will think it so very inattentive in us to be so long in paying

our respects, after the illness of poor my Lord. Rosabel has often wished to see their place ; and I can propose it to her as a little treat, and reward for her better behaviour :—and it may be managed to leave her and Howard at Drayfield, in our way back, for a time ; Mrs. Rivers will look well after her there ; and Howard wants change of air.”

“ Very true, sister,—you’re always so sensible.”

“ And if my brother can be brought to think it best for Rosa to stay awhile, Captain Ashbrook will have time to get acquainted with Charlotte. It is, to be sure,” added the widow, in a canting, croaking voice, “ quite a trial to have my brother’s family as a charge !—but our own little means, my poor jointure, will be none the worse for our giving up housekeeping for a time.”

“ But my brother means, I consider, that Charlotte, in another year, should—”

“ Yes, Alice, you are mighty slow—if Miss Fortescue should marry, Rosabel will be sadly too young, too giddy, too childish, to take charge of the family : my brother knows that. He will not put Miss Rosa at the head of affairs for

these five years. Never! to have the ordering of a set of extravagant, idle, good-for-nothing servants; and she, forsooth, as idle, and, if she could, would be as extravagant as themselves."

"Surely Captain Ashbrook will see the necessity for his marrying," returned Aunt Alice, catching up the train of her sister's ideas, "the property to go away from him to his cousin! and I suppose he has had enough of fighting by this time."

"I suppose so, too," answered Mrs. Waldegrave, petulantly, taking a last look at her accounts—"four and two are six, and ten make sixteen, for ribbons only—*Boulets rouge, Vestris' bleu*—so, Miss Rosa must have her ruffles pinked too—what is the age come too!—We will keep her at Drayfield, with her top-knot of bright red, forsooth, till he has seen Charlotte."

This arrangement was accelerated by an occurrence, which happened in a more convenient season than such occurrences usually happen. Howard, the youngest of the family, a delicate child, and consequently an object of peculiar affection to his father, was seized with what was then termed a milliary fever; upon the

subsiding of which complaint, change of air was decidedly prescribed for him. Drayfield, the Siberia of Mrs. Waldegrave's imagination, was formerly the seat of the Fortescue family; and, when the family was more opulent and less numerous, had been usually appropriated to the residence of the eldest son, if perchance he married, and required a separate establishment previous to his father's death. Of late years, it had, however, been found convenient to let a portion of the house, and to convert it into a farm; reserving, nevertheless, a few rooms for the use of the family at the Hall, to serve as a kind of infirmary to recover from, or as a change of abode to avoid those contagious diseases then so frequently fatal; and of which our grandfathers and grandmothers were, with so much reason, afraid. Drayfield had served as a nursery for the young Fortescues at various times, when Lady Fortescue had been ill, or confined; and, before the amelioration in Rosabel's condition, it had been Mrs. Waldegrave's custom to threaten her with being sent there as a kind of disgraceful banishment from the comforts of home, and from the undervalued privilege

of her own society, and that of her aunt. Rosabel had, however, a predilection, rather than a distaste for Drayfield, with which some of her earliest associations were connected ; and, at another time, she would have hailed as an emancipation from severer restraint, the prospect of a week or two there ; but, just now, new pleasures were opened to her at Hales Hall ;—her brothers were coming home, and there was going to be a ball at the nearest market town, at which Charlotte was to be introduced ; and Rosabel was not without her secret hopes that Sir John, being one of the stewards, might take it into his head that she should also partake of that amusement. Moreover, Captain Ashbrook had returned. At any rate, a large party was to assemble at the Hall to dine, and to set off from thence to the ball. Under these circumstances, poor Rosabel coloured with vexation, and was, perhaps, assailed by some less excusable feeling, when Mrs. Waldegrave coldly informed her that Howard and his nurse were ordered to go to Drayfield, and that Sir John wished her to accompany them, to prevent Howard from being

dull, away from his brothers and sisters; especially as she was his favourite sister.

“But,” added Mrs. Waldegrave, without pausing, lest there should be time for rebellion, “to shew you how very indulgent we are to you, I have obtained Sir John’s permission to let you stay here till to-morrow, that I may take you to see my own near connection, Lady Lovaine, and Medlicote; I know, Rosa, you have long wished to see that place, and I have no objection to a little indulgence now and then.”

“It *is* only now and then,” thought Rosa, as she retreated into her own room, to conceal or to vent her vexation: but she remembered her father—she thought of his wishes for peace—the consideration which he had evinced, in the conversation which she had overheard, for her real welfare. She felt her pride piqued, to evince that she was better than he had thought her.

“My father shall not find Rosabel so wilful, so hopeless a character as he has judged me. Now I am put to the proof, I will shew him that I can submit, for his sake. As for my aunts, I would not stir an inch on the road towards Drayfield for them, were they not my father’s sisters.”

## CHAPTER VII.

“ The rich and great are understood  
To be, of course, both wise and good.”

CHURCHILL.

IN all her little troubles and contests with her aunts, it was a source of irritation to Rosabel that Charlotte never seemed to sympathize with her. Charlotte's faculties seemed frost-bound; her feelings withered by the blighting influence of her Aunt Waldegrave's ascendancy over her mind; her capacity was, in fact, limited, and her feelings for any one, except herself, were devoid of generous warmth. It is one effect of early, and unlimited, and indiscriminate indulgence, perhaps its worst effect, to render the character selfish. From childhood, before her mother's death, Charlotte had studied, quietly and unremittingly, her own comfort and convenience: she was a politician in small matters, and in

the most unobtrusive manner; and, with an unconscious air, always secured her point. From childhood she had possessed the art of protecting her privileges, and of securing her property from the incursions of her brothers;—no easy matter, for men are not born chivalric; and, from the cradle, girls must yield.—In all sisterly contentions Rosabel was always defeated, and generally with loss of character; whilst Charlotte could preserve her own temper, unruffled, like those northern seas which are always frozen. Her calmness and forbearance were, therefore, ever the theme of praise; and were proportionably the more provoking, and afforded a greater contrast between her and Rosabel, for Mrs. Waldegrave to expatiate upon. Without entering into a comparison between the characters of the two sisters, it may be observed that they stood upon very unequal grounds with respect to their mutual affection. Rosabel's nature was all prone to love, and wanted only an object to bestow that love upon: indulgence had made her violent, not cold; as it was, she doated upon Charlotte, though her sisterly regard was perpetually chilled by

Charlotte's almost invariable desertion of her cause, when any contest arose between her and her aunts: yet Rosabel was unwilling to believe that a selfish caution had any part in this heartless abandonment of her interests and comforts, and, both to others and to herself, attempted to defend Charlotte's conduct, as long as she could blind herself, or others, to its real cause.

She knew, however, from Charlotte's wonted prudence, that it would be in vain to urge her to intercede with her aunts with regard to her not going to Drayfield; and therefore prepared, not without some girlish tears, for the seclusion of the Farm; consoling herself with the reflection that Howard would be happier for her presence; and, perhaps, comforted by the idea—so grateful to affectionate natures—that there was even one human being who loved her better than he did any one else. Too proud to show her mortification, and resolved to conduct herself to her father's approbation, she therefore, for once, possessed her soul in patience. A gleam of pleasure was, however, afforded her by the prospect of seeing Medlicote Hall, an ancient structure, and its mistress,

Lady Lovaine, as great a curiosity as any of the antiques which the old Hall contained. Rosabel had only once had a glimpse of her, as she was flying down stairs, in a scarlet riding habit; and, at that single interview, had had the misfortune to offend her ladyship, who was somewhat of a gaunt and masculine figure, by mistaking her for Hubert, who had just returned from hunting. It was in vain that she had humbly apologized, and declared that, had she seen her ladyship's face (for she was behind her), she would not have made the mistake. This explanation had not, however, been able to save Rosabel from a lecture on manners, a subject with which most young persons would gladly dispense.

Before eleven o'clock, on the day fixed, the party set out. Charlotte was left behind, although Mrs. Waldegrave made use of the family coach, because it was necessary to reserve a place on the back seat for Vicky, the beloved of Mrs. Waldegrave's heart, if she had a heart,—one of those round-headed, flat-eared little dogs, who live in a perpetual irritation, and keep others so; the politicians, I suppose, of the canine community. The deep-set, bright, dark eyes of Vicky seemed well to reflect the

harshness of his mistress's expression of countenance ; they were congenial souls ; his bark was often responsive to her notes of anger ; and, like her, he seemed ever on the watch for something to censure, and to quarrel with.

Drayfield was seven miles from Hales Hall, and Medlicote twelve miles distant ; both in the same direction. The road was uninteresting, but as rough and rutty as if it had been meandering over scenes of romantic beauty and variety. The day, for August, was cold and blowy.

“ Vicky does not like it,” observed Miss Alice ; “ ’tis too cold for him.”

“ Vicky, pet, sit down—there, be quiet,” said Mrs. Waldegrave, as if she were speaking to a favourite child. “ Rosabel,” she added, in a tone of voice totally different, “ you will remember, if you please, that Lady Lovaine is a woman of rank, and highly bred up, and cannot suffer that people of her ladyship’s station and our own should mingle with their inferiors. You will say nothing about being acquainted with the Warners.”

“ Is she likely to ask me ?” enquired Rosabel.

“ She! indeed!—Yes! my Lady Lovaine has her peculiarities, and there is no knowing what questions she may chuse to ask.—(Vicky, darling pet, be quiet now; you must not put your pretty nose out of the window; you’ll catch cold, love.)—She’s the head of my husband’s family, and the family of Lovaine has never had a blot upon its escutcheon as yet.”

“ I almost wish it had,” said Rosabel, as if involuntarily. “ I thought there was a something.”

“ —‘ Wish it had,’ child! why?”

“ Because—I don’t suppose it is right—I feel such an interest in those families that are some how or other related to our English Kings. The Plantagenets, for instance, or even Charles the Second; and I thought that those relationships never happened, some how or other, without a—blot—or a stain—or a something wrong—or a—; and I thought Lord Lovaine some how or other had been related—his ancestors, I mean—to Charles the Second.”

“ Oh!” said Mrs. Waldegrave, “ such a circumstance as that is not a stain, or a blot at all; but a very great honour. To be related to the Plantagenets, or Tudors, or Stuarts,

any way, *is* a very great distinction. Unluckily, there are but few Tudor descendants. You ought to know more of history than I do ; but there was only one well-authenticated Tudor peerage, I believe.—No ; *that* would not be a blot at all. It would be a terrible stain to have had an ancestor a mercer, or a grocer, for instance—to have to put a strip of leather across one's armorial bearings, like your friends the Warners. I have heard say his grandfather was a currier : now I do call that a blot, and a very foul one ; even dealing in wash-leather would not carry it off," she concluded, with a smile so sneering and bitter, that Aunt Alice re-echoed it in her weak way ; and Vicky, ever attentive, thought something was going on, and gave a start, and a short bark. But Rosabel, though prone to laugh, was mute and thoughtful.

By this time they had reached the gates of Medlicote Park, a place looked upon with great reverence by Mrs. Waldegrave and Aunt Alice. Like all narrow-minded persons, Mrs. Waldegrave had her worldly idols, her standards of importance and elevation, the monuments of greatness, to which she repaired in

the humble character of a worshipper. Like most arrogant and domineering persons, she was capable of a mean-spirited servility to the great and powerful, and of an abject dependence upon their notice and good opinion for her own happiness. Before she married, every thought was centered in the head of her own family ; it was “ my brother,” and “ my sister Fortescue,” continually. The shadow of their importance sheltered, without obscuring, her. After her marriage with Mr. Waldegrave, her powers of veneration were directed to the heads of his family. It was “ my sister Lady Lovaine,” and “ my Lord,” who were her oracles on all subjects, from the highest points of moral importance, down to the curing of a sore throat.

Lady Lovaine was a woman who chose to practise, or to affect, great eccentricities. In common life, she would have been accounted a very coarse, rude woman, who did not know how to behave ; but, being Lady Lovaine, her singularities were regarded by her inferiors as characteristics of a strong mind, superior masculine understanding, powerful judgment, &c. Like insane persons, she knew how to soften, in society where her freedoms and peculiarities

would not be submitted to, the strange and harsh features of her accustomed deportment. From the practice, however, of appearing singular, she had, in process of time, really become so, and “Lady Lovaine’s way” was a sort of proverbial phrase for every thing that was disagreeable, eccentric, and overbearing.

Lord Lovaine was far less offending, and, by a long series of gout, and a natural touch of imbecility, two things which his wife hinted were hereditary in his family, was reduced nearly to the condition of a cypher; like most men of the same description, not being wise enough or strong enough to take his own part. He made, however, what is termed an excellent husband; a despotic government, not under the Salique law, being completely established at Medlicote, the splendid seat of Lord Lovaine, and of his ancestors.

It was, indeed, a splendid place; truly English; at once imposing and comfortable. Rosabel, as the carriage entered the Park, exclaimed that she had never seen such elms, overarching the broad carriage road, and many

of their branches propped with artificial metallic aids, to sustain timber of such antique growth. Beneath, as in a vista, were seen the numerous antlered inhabitants of a scene at once sylvan and magnificent; and now, afar off, Lady Lovaine herself appeared, directing the operations of some workmen, who were employed in thinning the timber. A turn in the road soon brought her ladyship's visitants within a few yards of the place where she stood; but, though it was evident that she saw them, she moved neither feature nor limb to welcome them; but continued, with stentorian voice, haranguing her "subordinates," as she usually called them. She was dressed in a little riding hat, a drab great coat with capes, not the famous Maccaroni cut, invented by the reigning belle, Miss North, but a far less elegant, and more antique article, with a cravat, and large, masculine boots. This was her usual undress costume, out of doors, and was not, at that period, outrageously peculiar; but it was her figure, so gaunt, and stiff, that gave it a ludicrous aspect, as she stood, blown about by the wind.

"What," cried Rosabel, bursting into an

irreverential laugh, "is that Lady Lovaine? I really thought it was a figure set up to frighten kites or crows."

"Rosa—my dear," exclaimed both her aunts at once, "I am shocked—quite—"

But Lady Lovaine had, by this time, with commanding strides, reached the carriage, and ordering the coachman to stop, peeped in at the carriage window, taking a complete survey before she addressed any one.

"So, you are here, are you? and, Vicky, you are here, I see. So! I expected what I call a family inundation the moment I saw the coach. I am glad you were not half an hour sooner: I am so busy. Come, Miss Alice, do get out and walk; it is a sin to be driving for *young* people on this fine day. You have a niece there, I see: let us have her out too."

Rosabel, who had no objection, was delighted to jump out, and join her ladyship; but Miss Alice, who was regularly set forth for a morning visit, remained where she was.

"So! she is in full feather, I suppose; trigged out, I suppose, in her best *Artois*," said Lady Lovaine, contemptuously. "Charming

creature !” she added, in a lower tone. “ But you have clogs, or walking shoes, I suppose ? not water-proof, I dare say. Now if you want a recipe for making shoes water-proof, I can give you one. Let me see—but I have it all written down at home. It would be well for you to use it, your family being rather given to gadding about. Have you ever been at Medlicote before ?—Of course you are bound to admire this entrance. Your Aunt Alice calls it quite classical—ha, ha, ha ! it is Gothic, you know. Look up ; do you see the portcullis ? Now turn your head round, and tell me, do you observe my improvements yonder ?”

She pointed, whilst speaking, to a large bank, covered with flowering shrubs, on which was an ample terrace walk, the first of a series of terraces, the highest of which was clothed with shrubs, mantling until they amounted to a thick and hanging wood.

“ There, if you like to drown yourself,” said Lady Lovaine, pointing to a high spot in the ascent, “ is the spot where fair Lucy of Medlicote drowned herself, a hundred years ago, for a mere trifle—a disappointment of the heart. The girl must have been deranged, or a fool.

She was a direct ancestor of my Lord's. Well, come in, and have some luncheon: I suppose, like all the rest of your family, you eat luncheon—a very bad habit, and what I attribute Mrs. Waldegrave's indigestion to."

As her ladyship spoke, she marched in, without seeming to remember that there was any one behind her; crossed a hall, passed through a billiard room, proceeded through several apartments, and, opening a door, walked into a very small, close, kind of study, where sat, on an easy chair, with a cushion under each elbow, the infirm, harmless nobleman, whose virtues Rosabel had daily heard called up, ever since she had come into close contact with Mrs. Waldegrave and Aunt Alice.

"Here, my lord—you are quite astounded—why it is only something young and lively from Mrs. Waldegrave's store-room. But where are the two—old maids—I was going to call them? Oh, here they are. Well, girls, how are you? Begone, you wretch," she added, kicking Vickey out of the room. "There's no animal in nature to be endured, except a monkey. If you saw my sweet Jacko, Miss Rosabel, you would lose your heart di-

rectly. Talking of hearts, there's Captain Ashbrook somewhere about. If any one has a heart that goes a begging, it would be as well to bestow it upon him. Alice, have you *quite* done with such matters? You have? Yes, so I thought."

"Sir John quite well?" said Lord Lovaine, a shrivelled-looking old man, his face all nose, and no cheeks, and with a frame so attenuated, that one wondered on what inflammatory part of it that fierce demon of voluptuousness, the gout, could make its prey.

"Sir John, my lord, is quite as well, I consider, as the season will permit. We have had a good deal of ague about us, in the village, and down at the lodges. It has been remarkably trying this winter. Have you the ague at Medlicote, my lord?"

"Oh! the ague!" said Lady Lovaine; "I cure that directly. The snuff of a candle, boiled in treacle—a specific, quite; and a remarkably cheap remedy."

"Dear me!" said Aunt Alice, as if a new light had broken in upon her; "So it is."

"My lady," said Lord Lovaine, with an effort of speech which seemed like his last gasp, "is

an excellent physician ; she prescribed for me yesterday—a very powerful dose.”

“ A pound of garlic, boiled in strong, good beef tea ; to be taken at intervals—of two to four hours. Those who take it once, never have the gout again,” said Lady Lovaine, imperiously.

“ What a nice thing for my brother,” said Mrs. Waldegrave : “ remember, Alice.”

“ Try it yourself first, my good lady,” said Lord Lovaine. “ I assure you,” he added, in a low voice, “ ’tis most inflaming.”

“ Captain Ashbrook, my lady,” interposed the servant, who at this moment opened the door.

“ Well then, here is something more inflaming,” said Lady Lovaine. “ Mrs. Waldegrave, look well after your niece. Shew Captain Ashbrook into the library. He has been wandering about his old haunts, as he calls them, all the morning, and is not, I dare say, fit to be seen. Nevertheless, *c’est un brave garçon*. Come, Alice ; come, Miss Rosalina. I am glad they did not christen you Penelope—I hate classical names.”

“ My lord looks sadly, poor dear man,” said

Mrs. Waldegrave, as the four ladies trudged towards the library.

“ Oh, I am happy to say he is really pulled down a little, at last ; too full a habit by far—quite a comfort to see him reduced—quite a comfort, I assure you, Mrs. Waldegrave.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

“ His years but young, but his experience old,  
 His head unmellow’d, but his judgment ripe ;  
 ————— and, in mind,  
 With all good grace to grace a gentleman.”

SHAKSPEARE.

ON any other occasion, Rosabel would have loitered in the spacious rooms through which she now passed, adorned with curious cabinets, and with crystal vases, and Delft china, arranged about them, and their walls hung with many an antique portrait, or a favourite game piece, or flower piece. At any other time Rosabel would have deviated into the hall to gaze at the famous Henri Coutters, which hung there, depicting swans, whose plumage seemed to rise and unfold in all the dignity and beauty of nature. At any other moment Rosabel could not have avoided running to the windows to gaze out upon the lawns, deepened with stately cedars, or embellished by the flowering boughs of the lauristinus, not yet in all its pride of

blossom, its dark foliage contrasting finely with the soft green of the velvet sward. But now she hastened on, coming indeed last in the train, and almost treading on Aunt Alice's high-heeled shoes, or catching her foot in Mrs. Waldegrave's train. She fell back, however—she could not resist it—to look at some tapestry : she had never seen any before.

“ Captain Ashbrook is a great acquisition to the neighbourhood,” observed Mrs. Waldegrave to Lady Lovaine : taking the opportunity, whilst Rosabel was out of hearing, to make her remark.

“ Yes ; especially to those who have daughters or nieces,” replied Lady Lovaine ; walking, according to her custom, very fast, and leaving Mrs. Waldegrave, breathless, half behind her. “ Which of your young ladies do you intend for him ? Your god-daughter, I suppose.”

“ Oh, Miss Fortescue,” said Mrs. Waldegrave, loftily, “ has no occasion for any one to look out for her ; she is sure to have numerous proposals.”

“ The world, then, is altered since I was young ; for it was not then the practice to offer to young ladies, unless there were some temp-

tations besides mere prettiness or sweetness : but, since Charlotte is likely to abound in lovers, it will be as well to bestow Captain Ashbrook upon Rosabel—fair Rosabella.”

“ Your Ladyship’s opinion has always weight with me,” returned Mrs. Waldegrave, her colour mounting into her face ; “ but Rosabel is a mere child ; we do not sanction such notions in children of her age.”

“ Children of her age, sister Waldegrave, will have such notions ; and the more you keep them from male society,” she added, stopping still, and looking sternly in Mrs. Waldegrave’s face, “ the more of these notions they will have.”

“ Bless me, you astonish me !” said Miss Alice, who just now joined her Ladyship and Mrs. Waldegrave.

“ I should never have thought of your Ladyship sanctioning such things,” observed Mrs. Waldegrave, sanctimoniously.

“ That is Captain Ashbrook,” said Lady Lovaine, stopping short in one of the passage-rooms. The colour came into Rosabel’s face : but, after all, it was only a picture—a boy in a green velvet coat, with a dog beside him, stiff,

and quaint, and set, like most of the portraits of that day, yet, with a certain fire in his dark eyes.

“Is it possible,” said Rosabel, “can that be like Captain Ashbrook?”

“Judge for yourself,” replied Lady Lovaine, opening another door—“Ashbrook, why, for shame!—what self-indulgence! a soldier, and fatigued with a day’s sport!—here are Mrs. Waldegrave and the Miss Fortescues, your neighbours; not sisters, but aunt and niece:” she added, with an expression of half malicious pleasure; for she had a cordial dislike to Mrs. Waldegrave, an infinite contempt for Aunt Alice; who, having been the youngest of her family, could never be persuaded to think herself old.

Captain Ashbrook sprang from the couch on which he had thrown himself, being tired with the morning’s exercise, and turned towards the ladies, thus introduced to him, a countenance so animated and intelligent, that it would have been difficult minutely to have criticised its claims to regularity of feature. Yet, without being able to bear that test, it was not a countenance to disappoint the romantic par-

tiality which Rosabel had encouraged for her hitherto unknown friend. There was not beauty enough to endanger a man's being a coxcomb on that account ; there were no "chiselled, Antinous-like" features—no "polished brow"—no "dark fringes that swept the cheek by way of eye-lashes;"—in all these attributes of a hero of romance, Captain Ashbrook was deficient. His complexion was a good deal sun-burnt, and he looked older from that circumstance than he really was. His hair, which was well enough in its way, was atrociously turned back from the forehead, and rigidly trained into two regular curls, over each ear. Moreover, its natural beauty of hue was entirely obliterated by that infamous invention, powder, already somewhat in the wane for young ladies, but still used by gentlemen, and by military men retained until a period which we can all remember. Besides, to leave the poor man no chance of looking like a natural human being, it was clubbed, as they then called it, behind ; that is to say, tied somewhat after the fashion of a horse's tail, forming a sort of sequel to the unhappiness of the ill-used, tortured heads of those times.

With all this, it was some merit to look well ; yet Rosabel, from force of education, and not having had the advantage of our modern taste, thought it all very becoming. It was true, this mode of dressing the hair shewed to full advantage the fine, manly, open brow of Captain Ashbrook ; whilst the formal cut of a military undress, which he wore, harmonized, if any thing could harmonize, with the style of his hair. But, after all, men owe little to the details of personal appearance ; scarcely anything to feature, in the eyes of women of discernment, but every thing to expression, manner, and intelligence. It was the good breeding of Captain Ashbrook, his animation and ease—the superiority of mind, obvious, even in his casual remarks—for in these, I think, it is sometimes most obvious : the happy wit which he had of enticing people, as it were, to converse ; not plunging red-hot into discourse, as many do, becoming soon breathless themselves, and scarcely giving people time to assent. His evident wish not to shine outrageously himself, as a star of the first magnitude, but to please gracefully, and to draw forth the most agreeable qualities which his companions possessed.

It was all these attributes combined, with a certain easy gallantry to ladies, that formed the basis of his success in gaining their admiration ; and not his fine eyes, or Roman profile, or handsome figure, or any of those adventitious and unimportant circumstances. Captain Ashbrook had a happy look, a beaming, kindly eye ; when his face was serious, it was very serious—deeply reflective—almost stern ; but, in general, it had the expression of a refined joyousness ; not a coarse, unthinking mirth, but a gaiety, a gladness, which springs from a proper appreciation and enjoyment of the many delights of our daily existence. And, as yet, though the tranquillity of his present leisure hours was enhanced by the remembrance of past toil and privations, his experience had comprised no actual troubles, except the death of his father, and that was palliated by circumstances—no real affliction or bitter disappointment ; few things to wound his self-love ; nothing to sully his fame, or to threaten the stability of his fortunes.

Rosabel trembled, as, according to orders, she sat down on the very next seat to him, and thought she was dreaming.

Lady Lovaine, though not inhospitable at other meals, disapproved of luncheons, and therefore sat apart, looking on chillingly at the good appetites of her guests.

“Ashbrook, do you attend to my Cousin Waldegrave, if you please. Rivers, see that my Lord’s panada is taken into the study directly. Miss Rosa, are you actually hungry?—and when you have all finished,” she resumed, after allowing a very brief time for the repast, “Captain Ashbrook will shew the fair Rosabella the picture gallery.”

“My horses are rested, I believe,” said Mrs. Waldegrave, endeavouring to look placid.

“Very well; they can wait, I suppose; it will do them no harm to stand, or they can go round again to the stables. Captain Ashbrook, you know the way—but I think if you were to take Miss Rosa a turn on the terrace first, it would do you both good:—Aunt Alice, what are you stirring for? they don’t want *you*—well, do not stay above an hour at any rate, young people,” added her Ladyship. “Shew Miss Rosa my improvements, Ashbrook—the new alcoves and the fuchias.”

“Her ways are inexplicable!” said Mrs.

Waldegrave to herself, as Rosabel and Captain Ashbrook closed the door after them.

“ Captain Ashbrook is, as you remark,” resumed Lady Lovaine, a great acquisition to the neighbourhood. I am quite happy to have an opportunity of bringing him and your niece together—there they are—look, Alice, look—they walk too fast to be making love, I think—but Rosabel is really a fine-looking girl—remarkably like her mother’s family.”

“ My niece Charlotte,” observed Miss Alice, timorously, “ is allowed to be most of a lady ; so very well-conducted and quiet.”

“ Very likely ; but I don’t like quiet girls, I would as soon have Jacko without his tricks : quiet girls are like still waters, always the deepest. Mrs. Waldegrave, I think you were to have the recipe for my famous *tic douloureux* plaister ; I cannot give you the recipe, it is a profound secret ; but, if you will come with me to my Lord’s room, I will hunt for some of the plaister for you.”

She gave a parting look at the young pair. “ There they are—they seem to fly now !—what spirits your niece has ! you should bring her forward ; she will be a credit to the family.”

Meantime, Captain Ashbrook and his fair companion proceeded leisurely through the most frequented walks of the pleasure-grounds around Medlicote Hall, resting every now and then to admire the views, or to expatiate upon the characteristics of the scenery. Rosabel, accustomed to exercise, and therefore enjoying it, would have derived pleasure from the walk with any species of companion, or with none at all: perhaps she might actually have enjoyed her walk more without the society of Captain Ashbrook, whose presence she could not help regarding with some awe. She remembered that he had witnessed her early transgression; but, though she remembered it, it had, nevertheless, almost escaped Captain Ashbrook's remembrance. At first, when he saw her, a sort of vague recollection, an indistinct notion, came across him of some peculiar incident in which he had taken a part having attached to one of the Miss Fortescues; and he presently remembered the whole history. But two years of actual service had quite effaced the young lady's name and person from his memory, and he began to wonder whether this was the same Miss Fortescue that had a taste

for adventures. He regarded her, therefore, with considerable attention, was on the look out for eccentricity and flippancy, studied well the expression of her features, and ended by concluding that she was too subdued, and innocent-looking, too timid, and must be still too young, to have engaged two years ago in such a frolic. He thought himself remarkably fortunate, however, to escape from three elderly ladies, each endowed with some unpleasing peculiarity, with a fine, artless, and happy-looking girl, who bounded along to his heart's content, and whose very speed and elasticity were refreshing after the hobbling pace of Lord Lovaine, when he could crawl out, or Lady Lovaine's deviating and capricious ways, now quick, now slow, and incessantly stopping or running off. After all, thought Captain Ashbrook, as, standing by Rosabel, he caught a view of her glowing face, "there is nothing like youth in woman—especially after those three parchment, dried-up faces—I beg their pardons—excellent women, no doubt—but not to look at."

"Well," thought Rosabel, in her turn, "I had no idea gentlemen were so easy to talk to ;—I

am sure I shall never be able to endure Mr. Henry Warner again ;—there is something so very different—though I can scarcely tell what it is—I wonder whether he goes to the ball.”

“ You are serious,” said Captain Ashbrook, smiling—“ Perhaps you are not aware that you are quite out of sight of your aunts.”

“ What can he mean ?” thought Rosabel ; “ now he is referring to former times ; it is too bad.”

“ I hope we shall have a good ball at Cherverton next week,” resumed Captain Ashbrook ; “ do you think we shall ?”

“ I really do not know—I cannot tell—but I dare say—there is a moon, I believe—that is a great point.”

“ Oh ! certainly ; but the moon will not do everything. Do you like minuets ? For my part, I have led such a rambling life of late, I am not competent to a minuet.”

“ Nor I either,” answered Rosabel, disconsolately ; “ but I do enjoy a country dance. My sister Charlotte will be there ; but I am thought too young.”

Captain Ashbrook was all disappointment and gallantry, and said, of course, a great deal

more on the occasion than he would have done to Mrs. Waldegrave or to Aunt Alice; and Rosabel began to be very happy indeed. She knew not how it was, but she had never found the breeze so refreshing, nor seen the tints so fine; they fell with such delicacy, and, to speak figuratively, so discriminatingly, upon the early-fading trees.

Captain Ashbrook felt more enthusiastic than usual as to the beauties of the place, which, in general, he commended not; for Lady Lovaine's improvements, as she called them, were not to his taste. The words "lovely, charming, delightful," came, he knew not how, very readily to his lips; he began to think he had done his Aunt injustice, and that some of her plantations looked well in certain aspects—that the lake was not positively frightful, and that he would not altogether pull down the new wing of the house, which, the day before, he had, in his own mind, condemned. Nature, this day, to this gay couple, had been in her very best garb.

## CHAPTER IX.

Liberal Nature —————

What to beauteous woman kind,

What arms, what armour has she assign'd ?

Beauty is both.

COWLEY.

CAPTAIN Ashbrook and Rosabel had set off on their walk at a scrupulous distance from each other ; he respectfully handing her over any obstacle that occurred, but not presuming to offer her his arm. As they returned, however, descending terrace after terrace, they found themselves on much more sociable terms than when they had set out. They trotted down, very gaily, till, as they came to the last set of steps, Captain Ashbrook said, “ You will want assistance here, I think ; will you allow me to offer you my arm.”

Now Rosabel was seldom in want of assistance upon any occasion of this sort ; her companionship with her brother Hubert having taught her at any rate the art of jumping over stiles, clearing fences, and such like ; however, she took the Captain’s arm.

It was in this guise they walked up to the carriage where Mrs. Waldegrave was seated, and whither she summoned her niece by a servant. Lady Lovaine, who was, to use her own phrase, in and out all day, met them at the hall door.

“I have been unable to comply with your commands, my lady,” said Captain Ashbrook. —“Miss Fortescue is hurried away: she has seen scarcely anything.”

“Not much hurried, considering that you have been just an hour and a half in the grounds,” answered her ladyship. “But, as the park is not going to run away, you can make out your appointment with Captain Ashbrook some other day, Miss Rosabel; and then he can shew you the decoy.”

She raised her voice with malicious intent, and the design took effect; for at the words “appointment” and “decoy,” immediately two heads were popped out of the carriage window.

Lady Lovaine, who hated Mrs. Waldegrave, as sisters-in-law can hate sisters-in-law, and who could not be troubled with Miss Alice, took an especial pleasure in defeating any of their schemes.

“Your niece,” she said, putting in her head at the window, “can come some other morning to see the pictures, and the petrifying well on the terrace, and the decoy. They have found so much to say to each other between the yew hedges, that there is not time now.”

“Charlotte shall have that honour, it will be her turn,” said Mrs. Waldegrave. “Rosa, you are keeping her ladyship standing.”

“Besides,” said Rosabel, just as she was stepping into the carriage, “I shall be at Drayfield.”

“Drayfield? Well, that is only four miles off. Captain Ashbrook can drive the phaeton over for you, as he is here six days out of the seven. Good morning, Penelope; I hope you will enjoy your drive home. I like your niece vastly. We must all go to this ball, I suppose, next week. Keep your windows up,” she screamed, as the carriage drove off—“don’t allow a thorough air.”

The carriage drove off without her ladyship’s being able to catch the sounds of Mrs. Waldegrave’s reply; and she had therefore not the additional gratification of some fresh source of abuse of her sister-in-law, which she would

have derived from the intelligence that Rosabel was not yet to be allowed to share in the approaching gaieties. Mrs. Waldegrave left Medlicote by no means in high good humour. Aunt Alice was tired, Vicky was cold, and Rosabel could only console herself for angry looks with the reflection that Drayfield was only four miles off from Medlicote. She did not, however, attain the end of her journey without a stern reproof from Mrs. Waldegrave for having mentioned to Lady Lovaine the place of her destination.

“How she could suppose it would interest her ladyship to know what she did, or where she went; or how she could have the courage to speak out as she did before mere strangers?—She was sure Lady Lovaine must think she had been brought up in a very extraordinary style.”

An arrogant reply would, at an earlier period, have arisen to Rosabel's lips; but she had learned to check the useless and irritating response in which, in former days, she had indulged her girlish propensity to impertinence; and, recollecting that the moment of her separation from her aunts was at hand, she preserved

a calmness of demeanour which, as Mrs. Waldegrave soon afterwards assured her, was far more insulting than words.

At length the carriage turned away from the main road, and drove down a narrow, sequestered lane, thickly hedged in with the maple, now reddened by the advance of autumn, and the nut-tree, whose yellow leaves carpeted the path-way. Drayfield, with its blue smoke ascending through the trees, soon appeared in view. It was a substantial stone house, of some antiquity, and so far of a respectable appearance that an adjacent farm-yard, with large modern barns, and cow-sheds, appeared, as they really were, an inconsistent appendage to its former dignity as the residence of a private gentleman. To the right were the old-fashioned stables, as lofty as the house, and built to correspond, with pointed gable ends, a fane upon the cupola top, and a clock, which was now mute and out of repair, upon its front. The approach led over a field which still had the character of a lawn, though one or two cart-horses, and a calf or two, were grazing on it. The garden had the remains of by-gone ornament, on the relics of which the hand of utility

had stamped its progress. The grass was smooth-shaven near the house ; but a plot of potatoe-ground, between its more comely portion and the field, disfigured, and, as Mrs. Waldegrave said, vulgarized it. The hill to the right behind the house had been framed, in former times, into terraces, to a certain height, and a portly summer-house, heptangular and with a point, and mounted so high upon its stone basements that it seemed to command the hill itself, was still allowed to retain its use, or its no use. But beneath, by a little skirting shrubbery, and on a grass-plot whereon the delicate *Euominus* cast, at this period of the year, its shell-like calyxes, and contrasting with the red stems of the Service-tree, clothes were hanging out to dry, and clothes not either of a creditable description, but elaborate smock-frocks, blue aprons, cheese-cloths, and house-cloths, and all the family of dusters flying about in the gale. Rosabel, however, never thought that Drayfield could have been so welcome to her as it was at this moment. She quitted the carriage without one pang, emancipated from angry looks and lectures, and, curtsying to both her aunts, and sending her duti-

ful love to her father, entered the retired abode without even curiosity inducing her to stop to hear the minute directions for her superintendence which Mrs. Waldegrave was pouring into the attentive ear of Mrs. Rivers. A blazing fire, although the season was still mild, had been lighted to give an air of comfort to the apartment intended for her use. It was a spacious, square room, in the depths of which were a horsehair-stuffed black settee, and a spinet, three-cornered, more sonorous than harmonious. The walls, which shewed that the apartment had formerly been appropriated to goodly purposes, were hung with a handsome, old-fashioned flock paper, of a dark purple flower, and tobacco-coloured ground. Here and there were old family pictures, such as had not been deemed worthy of removing to the hall, when Drayfield was converted into a farm-house or Grange. An indifferent copy or two of some of Sir John's ancestors, or the portraits of sundry even of his honourable house, who had disgraced themselves in any way, were still permitted to hide themselves and their shame in this now obscure abode. Rosabel recognized, with a hasty glance, the semblance of her

great-aunt Rosabel, to whom she had often been compared in her delinquencies, and whose fate Mrs. Waldegrave had assured her would be hers, for she had disgraced herself by a lowly marriage, and had died heart-broken. Some ancient gentlemen, collateral branches, the carmine of whose faces had long since faded to a paleness ashy as their powdered toupees, with the relief of a modern kitkat of Mr. and Mrs. Rivers in their best suits—she in a flat-crowned, fly-away hat, garnished out with blue ribbons, he in his flaxen, curled wig, and single-breasted, light drab coat—broke the long line of wall ; whilst over the chimney-piece a large mirror, the only defect of which was its opacity, with gilded shells and cornucopias at the top, revived the notion of former splendours, of which it seemed to offer a dim reflection.

Howard, the sole companion of Rosabel in her solitude, was playing by a table, looking more infantile by contrast with the dark figures of his ancestors around him. Rosabel hailed the small, neat tea-service, on a round claw table, so indicative of comfort and attention ; and looked with pleasure upon the little silver tea-canisters, the pride of Mrs. Rivers's heart.

Here she was sole monarch, here at least she was free, and she began to congratulate herself upon her emancipation from perpetual trivial restraints, and to wonder that she should ever have felt reluctant to come to Drayfield.

## CHAPTER X.

This morning, like the spirit of a youth  
That means to be of note, begins betimes.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE ensuing day was bright and mild, and Rosabel was awakened early by the busy, joyous notes of the poultry under her windows, the lowing of bullocks, the monotonous sound of the flail in the threshing-barn, and the equally monotonous call of the Guinea fowl on the terrace slope. She arose and walked forth. All nature seemed in unison with the harbingers of the morning, whose triumphant expressions of instinctive joy had disturbed her slumbers. The gossamer, it is true, still silvered the hedges, and encompassed with its fairy veil even the lowliest weed: the distant prospect was wrapt in mist; but on the grass enclosure, near the house, the broad gleams of a steady and powerful sunshine had already dispersed the dew.

Rosabel called Howard forth to accompany her, and, passing through a wicket into a well-known path, which led from the back of the house to the hill behind, began to ascend the eminence. As she raised her eyes to a clump of fir trees at the summit, she admired the contrast of their dark foliage with the unspeckled blue of the firmament seen through their branches, and above the slender sprays of their tasselled, waving tops.

Rosabel's notions of religious gratitude were, as yet, quite undefined: the habit of tracing every enjoyment to the highest Source, had never been cultivated in her mind by any watchful care. She looked upon nature with a pleasure rather instinctive, than intellectual. The gladdening thought, that universal benevolence, as well as universal beauty, pervades the universe, had not yet enhanced her enjoyment of rural scenes. Yet, her young mind being left to itself, it did occur to her, as she looked around upon the deep repose of the fields, that the hand of man had left indeed its traces upon their cultivated enclosures, but that some more powerful and still more pervading spirit was also visible there.

The acclivity which she presently ascended commanded a distant glimpse both of Medlicote Park, and of a turn in the road which led down to Hales Hall. Rosabel reflected that her earliest thoughts and tenderest affections ought to be addressed to the home of her father and of her brothers and sisters; nevertheless she fixed her eyes with much solicitude upon what appeared to be the grey chimney-tops of Medlicote, rendered more distinct by the contrast of the yellow outline of the trees which encompassed them. A new interest seemed added to her existence: how, she knew not; but she was young and visionary, and had been much secluded from intellectual intercourse, and almost wholly debarred from kindly and gentle communion with others. She felt, therefore, an inordinate and unwarrantable degree of gratitude to Lady Lovaine and Captain Ashbrook for their passing attentions to her; and the idea that she was not so low in common estimation as she always had been assured, and the hope of being able to make herself agreeable to some one or other, inspired her, for the first time, with the ambition to please, and with a motive for rendering herself wor-

thy of being liked. Whilst these reflections passed through her mind, Howard, who had made a little solitary excursion within the limited paths of the wood, came back to call her attention to certain moving objects which had been quickly caught by the fleet glance of infancy. They were a straggling party of huntsmen, whose scarlet coats enhanced the rich hues of the woody glen through which they rode, by a dazzling contrast.

“Look, Rosa, look,” cried Howard; “and I must go down to the lane to see them near—I dare say Mr. Rivers is among them.”

Rosabel, however, endeavoured to stay his impatience, by assuring him that the huntsmen were probably only going to the place of rendezvous, and that, when the sport was over, they would perhaps, at least many of them, be returning the same way in the afternoon; and a sense of propriety, which, like most young persons of honourable mind, she felt more strongly when left to her own guidance than when others were responsible for her conduct, prevented her from complying with Howard’s request to run down with him to the near neighbourhood of the sportsmen: she waited

until all were passed, before she again sought the pathway which conducted them to the Grange.

But, in the afternoon, circumstances did not permit her to be so prudent. Howard, who had not forgotten her assurance, and who was wearied with having nothing to do, was watching to ensnare Rosabel to the gate which led into the lane, by those childish pretexts which the ingenuity of infancy knows well how to urge. It was "Rosa, come here," and "Rosa, go there;" "Rosa, get me a whip from that tree near the gate," or "Rosa, I want to see the cows come from milking;—until, about four o'clock, Rosabel was absolutely inveigled into Howard's favourite position near the gate. She was without either bonnet or shawl, and was in the act of pulling a branch from a beech tree, to please Howard, when a sound of horses' feet behind her startled her. She turned, and saw a party of gentlemen hunters riding leisurely down the lane. Her glance at them was momentary; but they, supposing that she could be nobody but the farmer's pretty daughter, were not sparing in their notice of her, or observations upon her. Rosabel felt the more confused

at this little occurrence, that she was habituated to the strict seclusion of her father's park, where unbidden feet never entered ; and, taking Howard by the hand, she walked towards the house ;—but, in a few minutes, one of the horse-men entered the gate, and rode after her.

“ I am not then mistaken,” said the intruder ; and Rosabel, her face crimsoning as she turned round, saw Captain Ashbrook. He stopped his horse, and she stood still—both then looking as if they knew not what to say.

As usual, the weather became a refuge for those destitute of the small coin of ready talk.

“ You are enjoying this fine afternoon—and your brother too ;”—Captain Ashbrook glanced around him as he spoke ;—“ I have often passed this place,” he said, “ but did not know that Sir John still kept it in his own hands.”

“ No,” replied Rosabel, “ he does not ; but Mrs. Rivers, the bailiff's wife, has been accustomed to take charge of us here, now and then, ever since we were children : when there was the small-pox at Hales, we were all sent here ; and now, Howard having a fever, I”——

“ You are sent to nurse him,” said Captain Ashbrook, taking up the unfinished sentence.

“But are you not rather dull here? Is not the seclusion more complete than is agreeable at your age?”

“Not more than at home; you know I am considered too young to enter into public amusements.”

“But not too young to be alone here,” Captain Ashbrook was about to say, but he checked himself.

“Drayfield is quite a home to me—a second home—Mrs. Rivers is so kind, and I am so accustomed to every nook and corner——”

“You know each dingle and bosky dell, I dare say; and since you are fond of reading—doubtless—pray can I bring you any additional books from Medlicote: what do you like?”

“Why, if you please, do not bring me any thing very serious—nor yet any thing very, very frivolous:—I have, for instance, with me the *Lady’s Magazine*,” replied Rosabel.

“—Which is a positive affront to the female understanding,” said Captain Ashbrook; “made up, if I remember—for I have not seen it since I came from America—of wretched tales, love sonnets, and enigmas; the King and Queen described in conundrums. In one number, a

letter from a lady requesting a cure for the cramp; in the next, her thanks for the remedy.”—

“And ending,” added Rosabel, “with little songs, and patterns of work-bags and flounces. I never was a great worker.”

“Nor must I bring you either the Gentleman’s Magazine—dry, close, fatiguing reading, indeed; all agreeable subjects abridged and cut down in it, and those of a recondite nature expatiated upon with a wordy minuteness—*that* will not do. Will you trust me to explore the Medlicote library, and to make a selection which I think you will like?”

Rosabel was only too happy to assent; and Captain Ashbrook, after lingering some ten minutes longer, departed; not without some difficulty in regaining possession of his horse, on which Howard had, during the conversation, been mounted, and lead about; and Rosabel was left again to her solitude—a solitude enhanced by one of the pleasantest recollections upon which her enthusiastic spirit had rested. Circumstances had thrown her into a position of almost intimate communication with one, upon whom her youthful fancy had long rested

with romantic interest. She remembered the time when she should have thought herself fortunate to have casually seen him at Hales Hall ; she, perhaps, at the bottom of the table, and he at the top. And now, yesterday to have walked with him, to-day to have met him again, seemed all a pleasant day-dream to her.

But Captain Ashbrook knew too well what the misconstructions of the world might be, and had too much innate delicacy and sense of propriety, to repeat his visit to Rosabel in her solitary situation. He took such means of rendering that solitude less irksome to her as his kind heart suggested, by interesting Lady Lovaine in her favour.

“ Just like them, Ashbrook,” said Lady Lovaine, when her nephew told her of his encounter—“ just like Mrs. Waldegrave—just like that goose, Alice Fortescue. So ! they want to keep this poor girl out of the way whilst Miss Charlotte is put forward, forsooth, as a marketable commodity.—Drayfield—the child—a mighty good excuse ! The very worst place in the world for a milliary fever—damp—cold—low—”

“ What a strange, unjust partiality ! And

to leave her in a farm-house at this season! when one knows farm-houses are never secluded; and so lovely a girl too!"

"Is she handsome?" asked Lady Lovaine, carelessly; "for there are such a host of those Fortescues, that I never can tell one from the other. But this is the one that ran away once, distracted by my sweet sister Waldegrave's over-virtuousness, and silly Alice's weak compliances."

"Is she really, really, Lady Lovaine, *that* Miss Fortescue?—I thought so, I guessed it. Good heavens! to drive so lovely a being to that!" exclaimed Captain Ashbrook, indignantly.

"Now, if there is one thing that can give me more pleasure than another, Ashbrook, it is to disappoint the manœuvres of the saintly Penelope—saintly as her namesake of old, who, in my opinion, was all humbug."

"At any rate, dear my lady, do be so very kind—and you know no one does more for the good of society than yourself—do, therefore, kindly drive over to visit this ill-fated young lady—in whom I protest I feel an unusual interest."

“ So I see ; and the good which you, and most of your age, will do, Ashbrook, will usually find some such objects—charitable at a small expense, inclination concurring. Now, if you took in hand a few of my blind old women—at the Almshouses—”

“ But I never could take old women in hand : however, I agree with you ; it is quite a duty. Even the young and fair must be old in time ; and I may live to say, of the charming Rosabel,

Those snowy locks, once auburn bright,  
Are now more precious in my sight  
Than golden hues of orient light.”

“ Well, well ; you act better than you talk,” said Lady Lovaine ; “ and that is what one cannot say of Mrs. Waldegrave—narrow-minded, sanctimonious— Well, to-morrow, I will set off, to oblige you, Ashbrook,—and to vex *her*.”

## CHAPTER XI.

————— such are the rich,  
That have abundance and enjoy it not.

ROSABEL was on the terrace walk, on the following day, when Howard cried out to her—

“ Look, Rosa, look ; here’s a gentleman with a long petticoat coming to see you.”

Whilst he spoke, Lady Lovaine, followed by a servant, rode towards the house. Her ladyship was attired in her accustomed hat, and cravat, and a scarlet riding habit. Her costume, however, had nothing remarkable about it, according to the fashion of the times ; it was her unfeminine aspect which rendered her conspicuous. Rosabel, however, thought little of any thing but the kindness which brought her ladyship to see her, and, running down from the terrace, her face glowing with pleasure,

gave Lady Lovaine a reception far more cordial than ceremonious.

“What have they buried you here for?” was her ladyship’s first exclamation. “Is not Hales Hall dull enough? I am sure it is like Noah’s ark, except that no couples go in there, nor go out either. It is all single blessedness there. So! you are head nurse, I suppose. Do they want you to marry the farmer’s son? What can Mrs. Waldegrave be about?”

Lady Lovaine was one of those persons who are quite independant of that part of conversation termed reply: she played the intellectual shuttle-cock single-handed: her discourse was all a monologue.

“My Lord’s very unwell to-day—cased in wash-leather by my advice—he’s a heap of gout and flannel. Ill—six days out of the seven—complains of cold legs—which I think a very bad symptom—shocking! I am so occupied, I can never get out; but I promised Ashbrook I would call on you to-day. Good bye. This place is damp; hope you have cork soles. Well, to-morrow I shall send my coach for you, to bring you to Medlicote. Mrs. Waldegrave must “sanction” it, as she calls it: I shall send

for you at twelve o'clock. I shall be very glad to see you. Don't expect me to entertain you : I have a world of business on my hands. So you are not to go to the ball to-night ? Poor Cinderella !"—

"I would much rather go to Medlicote to-morrow," said Rosabel : but Lady Lovaine rode off, without seeming to notice her.

She left Rosabel quite elated, and resolved to go to Medlicote, even if an express came direct to forbid her ; which was scarcely possible. She climbed the hill with renovated spirits, and looked along the richly wooded country towards Hales Hall, with many a wistful conjecture, even in her present elation, as to what might be going on there. "By this time," thought she, "the company expected to dinner are beginning to arrive. Papa is looking very stately in the great drawing room. Aunt Waldegrave is in her best satins, and best humour too, I suppose. Aunt Alice is all smiles ; and Charlotte — Charlotte," thought she, with something like a sigh, "is all in her ball gaiety, I fancy, looking very well. I wonder whether Captain Ashbrook will ask her to dance the first set with him or not."

Thus musing, and descending the hill with a step less bounding than that with which she had set out, Rosabel returned to the Grange, feeling somewhat more solitary than usual, by the contrast furnished by her own imagination of the social pleasures which at this time gladdened her home. She drew near to her temporary residence, and looked, with feelings approaching to envy, into the spacious house-place, or hall, in which the farmer and his family were now assembled. The blaze of a large wood fire streamed through the ample, though latticed window, and reddened even the slender leaves of the privet bushes which grew near the house; and Rosabel could see the venerable head of Mrs. Rivers's father, as he basked in the warmth on a settle within the chimney enclosure: and she could hear sounds of mirthful voices, and the clatter of tea cups; and she felt that she only, of all the inhabitants of the old house, was indeed alone, and precluded from the fellowship of kindred souls. "My father loves me," thought she—"why does he then permit the unnatural partiality which is shown to my elder sister, sowing the seeds of disunion and of jealousy between us? Did he

not receive me, repentant and faulty as I was, and assure me that it should never more be thus? And Charlotte too—oh, Charlotte! if you were generous and kind, you might open his eyes to the unfairness with which I am treated; but your very nature is altered too!”

She walked into the parlour, and tried to compose herself to read, or to needle-work, which Mrs. Waldegrave had supplied abundantly. Youth is ever buoyant; and the circumstances which would cruelly depress us in middle age are sustained in early life with an uprising spirit which has the semblance and effect of heroism, but which is only elasticity. Rosabel, after a few moments of abstraction and seriousness, began to read, and soon felt her spirits refreshed, and her fortitude replenished, by the instant change of ideas, which made a recurrence to her grievances less poignant. Howard was tired, and not well, and had been taken early to bed; she therefore had her tea alone, her candles were lighted, her fire replenished, and the darkness of night closed around Drayfield without her marking the leaden foot of time. In the absence of all distracting objects, she had become en-

grossed by her book, when footsteps, quite close to the house, the sound of voices, not altogether plebeian, and the occasional tingling of a bell, gleams of light breaking in through the crevices of the old shutters, disturbed and perhaps alarmed her: yet she rose from her studies with that sort of half enjoyment which the prospect of an adventure, be it fearful, or be it innocent, produces in a long and dull evening. A tap at the door announced the entrance of Mrs. Rivers.

“I came to tell you, Miss Rosabel, dear, not to be frightened,—and would you like to see the bat-fowling?”

“Indeed I should,” cried Rosabel: “My hat and cloak are both here—but stay, I shall put on my cloak only, as the hood will serve me for a bonnet, and I shall see the sport better. Come along, Mrs. Rivers. How delightful! I could not think what it was.”

“Take my arm, dear Miss Rosa. You know I have been trusted with you ever since you could walk alone, and I’ll take care now as no one sees you.”

“Who are they? Are they gentlemen—or farmers”—Rosabel was going to say; but na-

tural courtesy prevented her from drawing the invidious distinction.

“They’ve got young Warner among them ; may be you won’t reckon him a gentleman ; his grandfather has mended many a saddle for my father in his day ; he was a saddler at Derby, and the rest are all half-and-half gentlemen ; my own son’s among them, Miss Rosa.”

“Perhaps,” said Rosabel, drawing back, “I had better not go, Mrs. Rivers.”

“Why not, dear Miss Rosa ? They shall none on ’em see you, and nobody shan’t be the wiser ; come along—did you never see the sport ?”

“Never,” returned Rosabel, whose prudence was fast failing her ; and, leaning on the ample support of Mrs. Rivers’s well-covered arm, she sallied forth, by the back way, into the garden.

The party assembled to participate in this ancient but somewhat cowardly diversion were, as Mrs. Rivers and Rosabel passed behind them, engaged in silently fastening a large net over the trees which grew against the house, and in which sparrows and other small birds, victims of the sport, had settled themselves to

roost. Mrs. Rivers and Rosabel planted themselves under the shadow of a large *Arbutus*, the remains of former garden cultivation, and, standing apart, the gleams of light which played upon the turf, or flickered on the gravel walk, reached them not.

The party collected were of that class, the farmers of old times, before an altered position in society, and artificial habits, had broken up their real enjoyments, and had produced needless anxieties, the offspring of newly created wants, and of profusion and ambition. Bird-batting, or bat-fowling, or low-belling, by which last name it was anciently called, was a certain method of ensnaring small birds, and being somewhat ignoble both in its object and in the mode of pursuing it, was never, I believe, a prevalent sport among the higher classes. The group who now collected around Mr. Rivers's house were furnished with two nets; one of the men carrying a lanthorn, so contrived as to be shaded by a large socket or dish before he reached the place of action, held also in his hand a large bell, which, with the aid of the lanthorn, so astounded the poor little birds, that, turning their bodies quickly round,

the light plumage on their breasts was visible. Then the gentlemen of the net quickly secured their victims. The sport was pursued thus early in the evening, because the moon was to rise at eight; and the darker the night, the better the diversion. The managers of the net were forced to climb the tree; and many a suppressed laugh broke forth when, the light being suddenly displayed, and the bell raised aloft and sounded, the helpless victims were seen fruitlessly struggling between the meshes of the nets. Then they were consigned to the baskets, and in those temporary dungeons confined, until anon their little necks were wrung in the farmer's kitchen. This pastime, more honoured in the disuse than the observance, is still practised in the agricultural midland counties of England, and probably will be considered interesting only as the remnant of one of those ancient diversions which, before manufactures had defaced the land, engaged the yeomanry of England. Whether we have any thing better in the place of these now neglected pastimes—whether the bulk of the population are happier, because a few individuals of that population are richer—is not readily to be determined.

Rosabel, however, thought little upon these matters ; she was only wearied with the sound of the bell, and longed to rescue every fresh victim from the merciless grasp of its destroyer. The moon, however, began, in reproving majesty, to shine : the sport was over, and the party hastened to Mr. Rivers's kitchen, according to custom ; for great was the good cheer, and uniform the hospitality, at that time exercised in farm-houses.

Mrs. Rivers, with many apologies, left Rosabel at the door ; and the latter was in no humour for going within, for the silence of the garden, after its previous bustle, rendered it delightful. Unperceived, therefore, she stole out again : it was scarcely eight o'clock ; and in those peaceful regions she felt no fear in wandering about the farmer's domain, especially as the hunting moon, as it is called, had now risen, shedding upon the terrace slope that fulness of light from which warmth, as well as cheerfulness, is fancied by some to be derived. Rosabel was suddenly inspired, she knew not why, with a wish to walk down to the gate where she had seen Captain Ashbrook, and to return by the walk to the house which

they had paced together; and she was so unaccustomed to refrain from anything of this sort that she took it into her head to do, that she set off, reached the gate, looked out into the darkness of the lane, overshadowed with hedge-row trees, and was returning, in her usual bounding pace, to the farm, when the sounds of voices and moans of suffering met her ear. She stopped—all was silent—she walked a few steps onwards—the sounds were again heard—in a few moments she saw figures approaching, evidently men who had emerged from the lane, and who were walking towards the house. Panic-struck, she fled, and, looking back once only, thought she saw the two figures quickening their pace towards her. She ran round the house to the back door, which she shook by the latch, crying out, “Mrs. Rivers, here are two men, open the door.”

Her request was instantly complied with, and Rosabel plunged suddenly into the centre of a group of farmers and farmers’ sons, who were assembled round an oak table: she retreated with as much precipitation as she had entered, vexed with herself for her foolish fears.

“They are only beggars, I dare say, Mrs. Rivers; but they did walk so slow first, as if creeping in, and then so fast”—

“There they are at the front door,” cried Mrs. Rivers; “trampers, I’ll be bound, or Irish harvesters, come begging.—Why, you’re fairly out of breath, Miss Rosabel.”

By this time, there was a violent knocking at the front door. Mrs. Rivers, a stout, courageous woman, disdaining the assistance of her husband, or of her son John, snatched up a candle, and, sallying forth from the little parlour into which she had shewn Rosabel, marched towards the besieged entrance, Rosabel following her at a little distance.

“My name is Middleton,” said a voice, not plebeian, “and my companion is Mr. Henry Warner; he fell from his horse a mile or two from here. I fear his arm is broken. The horse was startled by some gypsies, who ran across the path. Will you give him house-room till I can get assistance?”

“House-room, oh, yes! that was never denied, here,” was Mrs. Rivers’s ready reply, in all the pride of hospitality. “Good patience! how ill he looks! John, come here! why don’t

you ? fetch opoldedoc ; quick, in the cupboard to the right hand, on the left shelf, in my spare house.—Dolly, a plaget of lint directly—quick, be ready—Roger, the gentleman’s fainting, get salts and the brandy-bottle—James, run for the doctor ; mind the bog, if you go across the common—quick—Oh ! it’s only three miles, sir. Miss Rosabel, dear, might I just ask the gentleman to step into your room, as there’s the settee, and we haven’t a scrap of room in the house-place, and”—

“Do you think I could refuse ?” cried Rosabel—“pray come in directly. I am afraid he is very, very much hurt.”

“I will see to it,” said Mrs. Rivers ; “don’t be alarmed, sir—there, open the window—lie down flat—shut your eyes, whilst I look at the arm. Oh ! after all, the bone is not come through the skin ; you’ll not have to lose your arm ; I have seen worse hurts, sir.”

“Thank God !” exclaimed Rosabel. “I am very, very glad.”

Young Warner, in pain as he was, looked earnestly at her. .

“Miss Rosabel Fortescue,” he said, with evident pleasure — for the strange mode in

which Rosabel had first been introduced to his family, had been the prelude to an occasional visiting on both sides, in which her warmth of heart, her gratitude, and freedom from the little airs which Charlotte had displayed, had rendered Rosabel a general favourite with the Warner family. Their interviews had not, it is true, been frequent ; but the Miss Warners had, now and then, passed what is called a long day at the Hall, and Rosabel had gone several times, by special permission, to Fairford.

Mrs. Rivers, of good, homely, practical knowledge, knew that all that could be done, until the surgeon arrived, was to keep down inflammation. Then the arm must afterwards be set, and the patient composed to rest. She prepared a cooling application, and was about to bathe the arm with it, when Rosabel said, timidly, “ Since I can be of no use here, can I write to Mr. Warner, or any of the family, to apprize them of the accident ? They will, I fear, be very much alarmed at Mr. Henry Warner’s not returning home, and ” —

“ You are very good,” said Mr. Middleton ; “ but Henry was to have slept at our house to-night ; it is only four miles hence. I will

return home when I have heard the opinion of the surgeon, and to-morrow it will be soon enough, as the accident is not dangerous, we trust, to agitate poor Mr. Warner's mind: ill tidings always fly fast enough."

"It is worth while," said Henry Warner, falteringly, as Rosabel left the room, "to be hurt, to have such sympathy."

Rosabel was glad that she had this little opportunity of shewing any slight attention to any member of the Warner family, towards whom she had very kindly feelings, which only wanted more frequent intercourse to ripen them into friendship.

Excited by the events of the day, it was long before she could compose herself sufficiently, after this adventure, to retire to bed. Some hours afterwards, when she had fallen asleep, she was awakened by the tramping of the surgeon's horse under her window, and, in the morning, the first tidings that greeted her, were, that Mr. Henry Warner had had his arm set, and was doing well: then a series of bulletins followed, whilst she breakfasted in Mrs. Rivers's own spare parlour: this was an apartment six feet by ten, with polished oak floor; varnished

by the industry of some neat-handed Phillis, even to the point of slipperiness ; its furniture consisting of a round claw table, bright, but not commodious, four ponderous oak arm-chairs, and a small square carpet in the centre of the room ;—an old-fashioned buffet, garnished with egg-shell china, stood at one end. About, around, were the insignia of the sportsmen, and of the farmer's occupations ; a pair of pistols hung over the chimney-piece, protecting as it were the profiles of Mrs. Rivers's father and mother, in black, shaded with gold touches ; a sampler with Adam and Eve, an apple-tree between them, Miss Rivers's first essay in the fine arts, and quills worked by some careful hands in silk overcasting, again betokened the pervading influence of the feminine gender ; a stuffed owl decorated another corner, an emblem of wisdom, counter-balanced by a Canadian goose, also immortalized, in the opposite extremity. Rosabel, early accustomed to the simple, antiquated, and perhaps vulgar tastes of her host and hostess, little indeed regarded what was within the house. Her attention was fixed upon the back-way entrance,

and upon the variations which its circumscribed limits presented.

The farm-yard denizens were all in activity: the team was coming in, hot and panting, from the early ploughing; a few cows were still permitted to linger among the fodder; the great bull bellowed lugubriously in the stall, through the half-opened door of which his short but ponderous legs were visible. To his grumbings the large house-mastiff howled responsively, whilst a concert in tenor notes from ducks, geese, hens, chickens, gallinas, and turkeys, filled up every pause. The slow, yet unlooked-for entrance of a yellow chariot, drawn by two post horses, occasioned a revolution in a scene which was rural without being tranquil. The cows fled, the chickens flew screaming, the ducks were run over, the turkeys gave out bravuras, the mastiff barked with a vehemence which seemed to border upon human spite.

In the midst of this tumult, bottles of wine, a medicine chest, some pillows, and a blanket, were carried out, and brought into Mrs. Rivers's parlour, by an attendant spirit.

“ Mr. Warner, and the Miss Warners, are arrived, to see Mr. Henry,” was the intelligence which accompanied this unloading ; and, not long afterwards, the further announcement of “ if you please, Miss Rosabel, the Miss Warners wish to see you,” was followed by the entrance of those young ladies into the room.

They were, as was proper, in tears, and exhibiting all the insignia of distress at their brother's accident. “ Poor Henry, poor dear Henry, how shocking, how distressing, poor dear soul, oh, dear me !” were for some moments the only sounds which broke upon the sympathizing ear of Rosabel. Phillis, the elder sister, was the first to recover from the paroxysm of a sorrow not deadly. She was what is called a strong-minded young woman, a person of clear judgment, decided opinions, and regulated feelings. Looked up to by a numerous family of sisters and brothers, Phillis had early learned to regard her own opinion as infallible, her determinations as a sort of final court of judicature, from which there was no appeal. She had much of her father's self-sufficiency, with more good nature

and sensibility than he possessed. As she thought highly of herself, so she judged severely of others. Every thing that came not up to her own standard of right was condemned unrelentingly ; herself, her father, and her own family, personified this standard, and embodied her abstract notions of propriety of conduct, perfection of judgment, and importance.

Amy, her sister, was the mental slave of Phillis—her shadow, and, like shadows, magnified the object which she followed. To repeat her sister's sentiments, echo and re-echo her opinions, imitate, in a weak, faint way, her decided assertions, and pin the whole of her faith upon her sister's responsibility, was the vocation of humble Amy. This veneration on the part of Amy, Phillis returned with affectionate interest ; for Amy was pretty, the Cynosure of gentlemen farmers, attorneys, clerks, young apothecaries, and hopeless curates. At present, the Warners were only in a third-rate county set, and Amy had not yet tasted the danger of any fleeting attentions from Captain Ashbrook, or the Mr. Fortescues.

But to return to Mrs. Rivers's parlour. After a due course of sympathetics, the young ladies

began to recover their spirits. First, they amended upon the strength of a good luncheon ; then they revived more completely over a blazing fire ; and, afterwards, rose into high spirits upon the discussion of a ball ; especially as Mr. Warner was safely bestowed, talking to his son, whom he proposed to harangue upon the carelessness which had produced his present accident, and the good fortune which had saved him from losing his arm ; an exordium from which the young ladies were not sorry to escape.

## CHAPTER XII.

“ Think not I love him, though I ask for him :

————— words do well,

When he that speaks them pleases those that hear.”

SHAKSPEARE.

“ THE ball ? Oh, yes ! it was delightful,” observed Amy in reply to a question from Rosabel.

“ I do not,” said Phillis, “ consider it to have been a good ball at all.”

“ Don’t you, indeed ?” cried Amy.

“ Neither of the county members was there,” pursued Phillis, “ though their families were : —the gentlemen were nothing but a collection of fox-hunters—the ladies held themselves insufferably high—and there was quite a commotion in the room, from Lady Lovaine’s taking Miss Crompton, Lord S——s’ natural daughter, from the top of the set, where she had placed herself, and telling her that her place ought to be at the bottom.”

“Very right, to be sure,” said Amy, modestly—“but what a fright that Lady Lovaine is.”

“Papa cannot endure her,” said Phillis; “she has affronted Papa:—as for poor Lord Lovaine, he is very harmless. And then her nephew, Captain Ashbrook, is become so very high—no one fit to dance with him but a Townsend, or a Fortescue, or a Percival.”

“He asked me to dance one set, but I was engaged,” interposed Amy, in a subdued tone.

“He knew you were engaged,” returned Phillis; “and he was too much occupied with somebody else to desire it;—talking to one person the whole night.”

“Was he?” enquired Rosabel, colouring slightly. “But who were the belles of the room? How were the ladies, in general, dressed? It will be quite an entertainment to me, I assure you, to hear any particulars, however trifling. How were you yourself dressed, Phillis; and you, Amy? And how did Charlotte look?”

“Oh! Miss Fortescue, as Miss Fortescue, must always be admired,” said Phillis coldly, “being who and what she is, and introduced by ladies of such quality as Mrs. Waldegrave and

Miss Alice——Though they are your aunts, I must say they are uncommonly haughty, Rosabel.”

“I am sorry you should ever find them so, dear Phillis :—but you know ’tis born with the Fortescues. Charlotte had her pearls, my mother’s pearls on, had she not? Were buffonts worn? And did she dance with Captain Ashbrook?”

“Yes, I think she did; did she not, Amy? twice, did she? I cannot say I considered Miss Fortescue to be the belle of the room, though people called her so.”

“Who was then the reigning beauty?” asked Rosabel, anxiously. “The Miss Goodyers, were they there? Does Captain Ashbrook know them?”

“Perhaps he does—not that his attentions were bestowed in that quarter,” replied Phillis.

“Then in what quarter were they bestowed,” cried Rosabel, impatiently, her natural frankness getting the better of her prudence :—  
“how can you be so tantalizing, Phillis?”

Phillis laughed, and so did Amy, and so did Rosabel.

“You have no chance, Rosabel,” said Miss

Warner; "all the world says that the heir of the Lovaine estates is to marry a Fortescue, and a Fortescue it is to be :—he was even (the object of his real attention being otherwise disposed of) flirting with Miss Alice all night."

"That was on Charlotte's account then, I am sure," said Rosabel; "I have no doubt it is quite a settled thing."

"I am certain he has no preference in that quarter," cried Phillis, warmly, and Amy of course seconded her—"in that quarter? No! I am positive that Captain Ashbrook has no preference to *Miss Fortescue*."

"Poor Captain Ashbrook," answered Rosabel with a smile and a blush, is transferred from one lady to another according to our imaginations, like a shuttle-cock, and after all——"

"After all," said Phillis, "may die an old bachelor; and, I think, will."

"I think so too," added Amy.

"However, he looked vastly well," pursued Miss Warner, "last night, in a bloom-coloured coat, embroidered down the sleeves, and with frogs at the button holes."

"But I am glad," said her sister, "he has

not adopted the new rams' horn curl, so odious."

"Really," cried Rosabel, "you make me quite sensible how much out of the world I live ; I know nothing of these modern fashions."

"Then you have not seen *frivolité*," exclaimed Amy, eagerly ; the most lovely trimming!—and mixed with feathers—quite enchanting!"

"I like no trimming but the drooping willow, feather trimming," observed Phillis, imperiously. "It would be as well, I think, if Miss Fortescue were not to be the very first in the county to set the fashion of leaving off the apron—not quite the thing, as Papa says."

"Nor Miss Alice ! Rosabel, forgive the remark. Fancy your aunt Alice, with top-knots of Elliott's red-hot bullets—the new ribbon, all the rage," remarked Amy.

"Like a bunch of poppies, I should think," said Rosabel.—

"Upon stubble," added Phillis, "which your aunt's hair, powdered, and set up with that charming little fringe of locks which she wears to shade her forehead, is not unlike."

“Mrs. Waldegrave’s lappets were twisted with pearl,” resumed Amy, after the three young ladies were fairly exhausted with their irreverent merriment upon aunt Alice’s hair.

“And her spangles all tarnished,” said Phillis, “having been shut up for half a century, I dare say.”

Their discourse was interrupted by a summons from Mr. Warner, and a request that Miss Rosabel Fortescue would allow his son the honour of thanking her for her attention on the preceding evening. Mr. Warner was now in a great hurry to depart, and it seemed as if he anticipated the worst public results likely to occur from his mind being so much engrossed by domestic concerns.

“A man like me, in a public capacity, Miss Rosabel, should have no private business of his own to attend to. When poor Mrs. Warner was alive, all these things were managed for me. Really a man like myself should have nothing to harass him at home:—I meet with mischief, roguery, and trouble enough out of doors, God knows.”

“Well, sir, there is no help for these matters,” said Phillis, imperatively, as, preceded by Rosa-

bel, she entered the room where her brother still lay, as on the preceding evening. Henry Warner was justly regarded by his acquaintance as the most promising member of his own family. In early life he had been wild, forward, and idle; but the strong discipline of a college life, and an association with young men of talent and exertion, had drawn forth a capacity of no contemptible order, and repressed, if it had not cured, defects of no very serious character. He was intended for the bar, a profession which Mr. Warner had often lamented not having followed himself, cut out for it as he was, according to his own estimation. Rosabel, who had not seen Mr. Henry Warner since he had taken his degree at Cambridge, and who had scarcely glanced at him on the preceding evening, was struck at the improvement in his appearance and manner. He was a tall and gentlemanly young man, with a countenance at once intelligent and animated:—bolstered up by pillows in the enclosure of Mrs. Rivers's capacious easy chair, he thanked her for her ready surrender of her own sitting apartment with so much grace and ease of manner, he looked so very

interesting in his character of an invalid, and he appeared to be so very much obliged to herself, that Rosabel could almost have forgotten that he was not among her own privileged set, out of whose pale she had been educated to think none were gentlemen. She was interrupted in her enquiries and condolences by an announcement from Mrs. Rivers that Lady Lovaine's carriage waited to convey her to Medlicote. Having taken a hasty farewell of her friends, she ran to arrange her dress, leaving Mr. Warner much mollified by the affability of her manners to himself, Phillis and Amy more than ever her friends and partisans, and their brother disposed to admire her with as much warmth as the inferior caste of Warner could presume to feel for a Fortescue.

## CHAPTER XIII.

“ The superstructure of pride seemed bottomed upon a sense of worth.”—ELIA.

ROSABEL found Lady Lovaine in a kind of laboratory, weighing out grains of calomel, and grating rhubarb. Some camomile tea was infusing in a pipkin on the fire, and there was a compound odour of senna, gentian, and sarsaparilla. Her ladyship's maid stood by, labelling bottles, and folding little packets, which ever and anon she transferred into a small basket.

“ How are you, my dear? You will excuse coming to me here: I am very busy;—Laton, wrap up that bolus in wafer paper. I shall take you, Miss Fortescue, to see my villagers; you have no idea in what capital health I keep them. Laton, do not forget the bandages, and

linen rollers for the bad legs. I use Buchan : do your aunts use Buchan ?" added she, peeping into a large open book, as she spoke.

" You don't know, indeed—you seem to be kept sadly in the dark about many things, at Hales Hall. Since some of you must marry clergymen, or squires with small estates, it would be as well for you to learn these things. The worst of it is, that the poor have such a great dislike to take medicine—they are as bad as my lord. But come, my dear, I have two women, five children, and six old men to visit."

They sallied forth, and moved towards the village at a running pace, the conversation going on in the most desultory manner, and all on one side. Lady Lovaine was quite an amateur in accidents, ailments, operations, and remedies, and could not hear of any thing connected with her favourite subject, without longing to be in the midst of the business.

" Broke an arm ? How ? When ?" demanded she, suddenly stopping, whilst Rosabel was telling her ladyship one of the adventures of the preceding evening. " What advice has he had ? My dear, I am quite sorry you did not let me

know ; I would have come over, and seen the young man this morning. What embrocation now does Mrs. Rivers use ? Was it effectual ? I must have her receipt. Does she use lint, or rag, cotton lint, or linen ?” As she spoke, they reached Medlicote, a straggling hamlet, rather than village, with here and there a bettermost kind of cottage, or a substantial farm-house, to break the lowly aspect of the scene. Human population seemed the only thing which thrived here—troops of boys and girls running into the gutters, or stopping up the path-way with their little acts of reverence, irritated Lady Lovaine beyond measure.

“ Of all things, what should people have children for ?” said she, petulantly. “ Well, Nancy, how are you ? How is your mother ? What, another child ! eight ? How dare she go on so ? Tell her I am very angry with her.”

Her ladyship proceeded at a rapid pace, sometimes stopping to enquire kindly concerning the health of certain of her patients, at other times condescending to scold the thoughtless boys who were playing truant from school, and wasting their time playing marbles. On a sudden, she darted off across the road, saying to

Rosabel “come and see my school ;” and, with the rapidity natural to an energetic and impetuous character, she bolted into a low-roofed edifice, where the discordant sounds of uncultured youthful voices, raised, as in low life they usually are, to their utmost pitch, made Rosabel start back, and even Lady Lovaine hold her hands for a moment to her head. There was every gradation of discord which could jar upon the senses, from the twang of boyhood, to the tremulous scream of infancy. All might be harmony and system, but confusion and unintelligible repetition were alone evident to the uninitiated spectator. A stern-visaged man, with a pen behind his ear, and a long wand of office in his hand, stood in the midst of the more advanced pupils : a woman, with a hot angry face, and corresponding tone of voice, seemed to be making some lesser victims in one corner as unhappy as infancy can be rendered—an unhappiness which ceases, at that period of life, with the cause which gives it birth.

“Is it not a pleasing sight ?” said Lady Lovaine, her fine features beaming with a pleasure at once benevolent and self-approving. “This school, Miss Fortescue, is my raising :—

just think how much may be done in five years—will you hear a class? Have you a taste that way?”

“No?”

“Extraordinary! I own I cannot stand it myself; but my nerves never were strong. You know, I suppose,” she continued, as she again emerged into the main road, “that my nephew, Captain Ashbrook—Sukey, forshame now: not at school? you shall be expelled, you little sinner, for non-attendance—You know, of course, Miss Rosabel, that Captain Ashbrook is to marry?—John Hobbins, how is your rheumatism? Have you put on the plaister? Well and good; your sister?—I must just cross over to speak to widow Barnes. Now, Laton, unload—hydrarg here—with lenitive elect.”

“At least,” continued Lady Lovaine, after leaving Rosabel for a few minutes in suspense, in the middle of the road, “the world has settled it so: and now, if you wish to see a poor consumptive tailor, in the last stage, with a widow, that is to be, and three children, all in the greatest distress, follow me—don’t shrink, those cows are perfectly quiet.”

“I have now only one lumbago, and two

cases of erysipelas, to visit," pursued her ladyship, as she quitted the house of the poor tailor, who found himself too ill, as many of her patients did, to see even his patroness.

"But, perhaps this ramble is too much for you? young ladies of the present day have no constitutions; they are knocked up directly. And so, Miss Fortescue is to be, according to speculation, the lady of Ashbrook—Mrs. Waldegrave's Charlotte—and, perhaps, at some future period, the mistress of Medlicote.—'Hail, Thane, that shall be!'—How do you like this prospect for your sister?"

She glanced with seemingly careless haste at Rosabel's varying countenance, but hastened on, exclaiming, "there's Ashbrook now, do you entertain him, while I cross over to Widow Green's. I forgot, Laton, the sassafras drink for her."

Captain Ashbrook rode leisurely at first, over the little rustic bridge which bestrode a narrow stream, fringed with osiers and willows; but, on seeing Rosabel standing alone, on the quiet pathway of the village, quickened his pace, and, dismounting from his horse, consigned it to his groom.

“Lady Lovaine will be here in a moment,” said Rosabel, eagerly ; anxious to explain her seemingly lonely appearance in the village.

“My lady begs you will not wait for her ladyship, but will walk home with Captain Ashbrook,” said Mrs. Laton, who now advanced towards them ; “she may be detained, and thinks that Miss Fortescue is tired.”

“Very likely ; I am sure that I should be,” said Captain Ashbrook, as Laton, having delivered her message, left them. “There is a very pretty turn down this way, to an old decoy, famous, in the days of Elizabeth, for wild ducks and water game of all sorts. Will you allow me to shew it to you ? I know my aunt’s rambles too well, not to suppose that you must be fatigued if you attempt to follow the devious windings of her paths. You will think,” he added, “that there is something whimsical in the family, when I conduct you down this lane, from which all prospect is precluded, and which seems, at present, to lead to nothing.”

“Oh, but I like a genuine country walk,” said Rosabel ; “I am tired of parks, and plantations, paddocks, avenues, and terraces.”

“—Too much cultivation—too much formality

—and something like imprisonment, perhaps,” replied her companion ; “ you like those roads which seem open to the rest of the world ; where the homely pursuits of the humble and free are carried on.”

“ Yes ; that is what I like ; they give me a sensation of freedom, which one never feels hemmed round by palings and stuck fences.” Both Rosabel and her companion were silent for for some moments. The narrow lane seemed interminable ; its sides were closed in by the wild rose, now leafless and deprived of all its glories, save of the rich scarlet hews, which form its latest adornments : the nut-trees and the silver birch, interspersed in the hedge-rows, shed their leaves across the path-way, and through their slender branches occasional glimpses of the rich home scenes of an agricultural country might be seen. Suddenly, the road widened, and the stream, which irrigated the meadows near the village, swelled into some importance, and ran across it. Above its shallow course rose a bridge of some architectural pretensions ; the arches were symmetrical and regular, and the rich old-fashioned structure was edged and

fortified with stone. On one side, behind a stately row of limes and alders, at this season fading in the utmost glory of Nature's colouring, the waters of the stream were banked up into a pond, long and dark, and its surface, now in its degeneracy, defaced with weeds, and disguised by little islets, upon which the willow-herb and teasle grew, intermixed with twigs of osier and the naked stems of reeds. The pool was encircled with trees, and in its dank waters, at a distance, some remains of its former purposes might be traced. On them the water-hen and coot still glided, and reared their young in the sedgy sides of the aquatic enclosure. On a bank, slightly elevated above the water's edge, stood a gloomy-looking tenement, ancient, with gable ends and ponderous chimneys, and appropriated, in former days, to the residence of those who had the important charge of the decoy. A complete seclusion reigned around the whole scene. The house fronted another way, and, in its dark and isolated situation, seemed fit for the purposes of decoying human victims, suitable for treasons, murders, or infliction of the basest revenge.

“ How beautiful that weed !” Rosabel stooped, as she spoke, to pluck a spray of the myosotis, which grew in the shallow edges of the water, near which she stood. Captain Ashbrook, quicker than herself, was the first to disentangle a spray.

“ Now, I am so very ignorant,” said Rosabel, “ though I have lived all my life in the country, I do not even know the name of this flower—do you ?”

“ It is the Forget-me-not,” said Captain Ashbrook, with a momentary hesitation, as he placed the sprig in her hand.

“ How foolish I am,” thought Rosabel, “ to blush ; but it ought to have been given to Charlotte ;” and, after walking a little while, she conscientiously, as she deemed it, let the flower fall ; but not, it must be confessed, without a slight pang, which enhanced the virtue of the sacrifice.

They paused some time upon the bridge, then moving forwards, leaving the Elizabethian structure behind them, arrived on the brow of the hill, whence, by a gentle descent, they quickly, perhaps too quickly, reached the gates of Medlicote

Park. Something, scarcely to herself acknowledged, impeded the course of Rosabel's enjoyment in this excursion; yet with what fondness did she, in after life, recur to this walk, as to one of the most fleeting, yet greatest, enjoyments which the tenor of her early days afforded. Nevertheless, there was a contrariety in her feelings and wishes, for which she felt herself almost culpable. She had just heard that Captain Ashbrook was paying his addresses, or was thought to be paying his addresses, to her sister. Why could she not more cordially rejoice at the circumstance? Why was he less the idol of her girlish fancies to-day than he had been yesterday? His very attention to herself no longer afforded her the pleasure it had imparted before; and, dearly as she thought she loved her sister, had lost much of its zest since its motive was supposed to spring from a secondary source.

Captain Ashbrook, however, soon succeeded in restoring his absorbed companion to somewhat of her usual elasticity of spirits. The charm which women of taste and sensibility find in the society of well-bred and well-

educated men, and which they are taught to conceal, but of which they should rather be proud than ashamed, began, by degrees, to assert its influence over Rosabel's untutored, but not unstored, mind. Captain Ashbrook had those tastes, and that varied information which experience, as well as early culture, is necessary to impart. His mind was almost in its maturity—hers just expanding, but able to comprehend, and therefore, in some measure, to appreciate the powers of his. Captain Ashbrook had an eye for beauty, both intellectual, moral, and inanimate ; and, though a travelled man, he could discern, with a well-judging taste, the peculiar charms of the scene—not romantic, but yet fair—through which his footsteps now wandered. Medlicote, with its sunny dells, had been familiar to him from childhood. Every thorn which grew on its swelling meadows, every by-path through its thickets, were familiar to him. There was a sort of affectionate enthusiasm in his feelings for the old place, in which Rosabel, from her love for Hales Park, participated. Yet he looked upon it with the eye of an improver ; and in that Rosabel participated too.

“ Were this place mine,” he said, stopping and leaning, with Rosabel on his arm, over a gate, “ I should take down that summer-house, and allow the rocky summit of that mount to be partly visible through the trees:—I should undo a great deal that has been done here—it is the usual error in park scenery to do too much. Look back, now: had not that belt of pines been planted, we could have caught a glimpse of the decoy; and what a fine object its gables would have supplied beyond those dark woods. I should turn that road round by the paddock, and I should—but you smile at my visionary improvements.”

“ Perhaps they are not altogether so visionary,” said Rosabel, laughing. “ I never knew till to-day, when Lady Lovaine told me, that you were the—the—”

“ Heir to Medlicote, I suppose you mean,” said Captain Ashbrook. “ Well, so you are very much shocked at my anticipating my honours in imagination. But this has been so early and so much my home, that I feel like a son here; you know Ashbrook is no home to me. Here I have, at least, a sem-

blance of domestic life—a ray from that bright centre of enjoyments, from which, hitherto, my profession has debarred me.”

He laid an emphasis on the word hitherto ; and Rosabel thought to herself, “ what a prospect for Charlotte !” By degrees she gained more courage, and, the true spirit of woman-kind rising uppermost, she began to revolve in her own mind how she could introduce some topic which could lead to her sister — could elicit her appearance at the ball—women always consider appearance as half the battle won ; could raise a blush from Captain Ashbrook, or ensnare him into a sigh. Women are generally fertile in manœuvres ; but Rosabel was not at present an adept in wheeling round to the point which she desired to ascertain. At present, it was most easy to her to say exactly what she thought ; the world had not yet taught her the difficulty of being sincere. However, she endeavoured to make her first essay in conversational tactics, as, with Captain Ashbrook, she arrived very near to the front entrance of Medlicote. There was only a small portion of the lawn to be traversed, and, in despair, she began—

“ The Miss Warners were at the ball the other evening, they told me.”

“ The Miss Warners!—have you seen them since the ball ?” said Captain Ashbrook, surprised.

“ Oh, yes ; their brother met with an accident near Drayfield ; they brought him back to the farm.”

Captain Ashbrook was all astonishment and concern ; he knew more of Mr. Henry Warner than any of the family ; he was full of those minute, accurate enquiries which men make, not contented, as women usually are, with a flaming description of a mere catastrophe ; but Rosabel was not particularly happy, on this occasion, to reply to all his queries. She was obliged, however, after all, to tell Captain Ashbrook about the bat-fowling, which she would gladly have passed over ; and her description was such, that Captain Ashbrook guessed, though he did not say so, that she had been a witness to the sport. He looked very grave ; and Rosabel was rather surprised that he seemed so much concerned, as the accident had not proved serious.

They reached the hall door ; but, some how

or other, their steps moved involuntarily, as it were, round and round the carriage sweep, instead of ascending the hall steps.

“And the Miss Warners were saying,” recommenced Rosabel, “that minuets are not quite so much in vogue ; I am very glad—I remember what I suffered in learning the Minuet de la Cour ;—and that Miss Churchill was the belle of the room.”

“Minuets—oh, yes ; they will be quite abandoned, I do hope—which Mrs. Waldegrave was regretting—I wish that had been the case some years ago, before we all had the trouble of learning them.”

“So do I, indeed,” said Rosabel ; “but,” she added, hesitatingly, “is Miss Churchill tall ?”

“Did you never see her ?” enquired Captain Ashbrook, in return : “she must have been often at Hales Hall, I should think.”

“Yes ; but you know, or more likely you do not know, though I think I mentioned it, that I am not yet introduced. I do not enter yet into the large dinner parties at home.”

“Is your sister, then, so much older than you are ?” asked Captain Ashbrook ; “excuse me, I am asking an improper question ; but I

thought there might have been some brothers between."

"Now, then, he is opening upon the real subject of his interests," thought Rosabel.

"No! Charlotte and I are very, very nearly of an age—that is to say, there are only eighteen months between us."

"And is that a cause of sorrow," said Captain Ashbrook, smiling; "for I think I heard, did I not, something like a sigh upon the occasion? At your age, young ladies are apt 'to chide slow-footed time,' until the period arrives when they are to be emancipated from domestic controul. Have you then learned to love your chains?"

"Now, then, he wants to find out what age Charlotte is," said Rosabel to herself, "and I will relieve his suspense; I will tell him at once.

"Charlotte was nineteen last May," she said, abruptly.

"That is a very dexterous way," returned Captain Ashbrook, "of letting me know how discreet an age *you* have attained; and, indeed, I quite agree with what is passing in your thoughts, which I interpret to be, that you were

entitled by your age to go to the ball, and that it is a great hardship that you did not go."

"Why will he turn every thing off in this manner?" thought Rosabel.

"I am sure," she said, trying to be generous, "that Charlotte would have been very glad if I could have gone with her; but it was not thought proper by my aunt. Did she dance much?"

"Who? Mrs. Waldegrave, or Miss Fortescue?"

"Oh, my sister, to be sure: my aunts, I should think, have not danced since the days of Queen Caroline."

"Your sister, I should think, must have danced all the evening; but I understood you had heard every particular from the Miss Warners—your interview with them was not, then, probably, of long duration?"

"This must be intentional, tiresome man," thought Rosabel, as, summoned by the half-hour bell, she turned into the house and ran up stairs to dress.

## CHAPTER XIV.

“ You are rather point device in your accoutrements.”

AS YOU LIKE IT.

LADY LOVAINE sacrificed so far at the shrine of vanity, or rather of custom — that more powerful bond—as to cast off, at dinner-time, her masculine attire, and to “dress;” a term formerly of far more extensive signification than in the present day.

She appeared, on the occasion now described, in a cardinal-blue lutestring, not indeed of the newest manufacture ; (for garments then, like friends, lasted a life-time) ; made something after the form of a pelisse, and, opening at each side, displayed underneath a petticoat of pea-green, festooned with bows ; over this was a sprigged muslin apron, trimmed at the pockets and round the edges with ribbon of that fashionable colour entitled Elliot’s fire, or Elliot’s

red-hot bullets, from the gallant defender of Gibraltar. Hair-powder, though not long after deprecated with such success by the young and fascinating Duchess of Devonshire as entirely to procure its disuse, was never abandoned by Lady Lovaine, who held as religiously to it, as to her politics and her domestic medicine. On the top of her head, fashioned to a cushion, were lappets of lace, more curious than clean, which supplied the place of a cap: but, being past the days of her youth, her ladyship wore a contrivance for the neck, the famous *Gorge-de-pigeon* handkerchief; above which, a band of narrow black velvet, confined by a knot of jewels, still served to set off a neck, the original grace and form of which were not, even at Lady Lovaine's age, entirely effaced by time. Thus arrayed, and adopting, with her company dress, a greater degree of courtesy and dignity of manner, Lady Lovaine might be said to grace the head of her table, and, like most of the old school, she never appeared to so much advantage, as when exercising those duties of hospitality which are now almost entirely superseded by modern custom.

Lord Lovaine was, in the latter part of every day, a beau of the old school ; a sloven of the old school, in the morning. The habits of men, and of women too, are more equable now, than they were formerly. If men, Englishmen in particular, never now seem to be full dressed ;—if the cut of their coat be plebeian, their whole air commercial, if the dingy black of a well-worn cravat have superseded the fanciful grace of a neck ruffle, or the neatness of a plaited muslin stock ;—if all the insignia of rank, powder, embroidery, and swords, be exchanged for the close crop, the useful, warm, tight-fitting waistcoat ; the cane ; and if the long trouser, loose as well as long, be now invariably always adopted ; and the boundary between the knee and the leg be for ever lost, or seen only on court days ; if all the taste to be displayed in knee-bands and buckles evaporate, from want of an object to bestow itself upon ;—still a more constant attention prevails to neatness, cleanliness, and propriety in costume, than formerly pervaded even the most refined society.

Lord Lovaine, after revelling all the morning

in a dressing gown and velvet night-cap, appeared at the bottom of his own table, in a blotting-paper-coloured suit, a well-powdered peruke and tail; the collar of his coat well powdered too; a large cameo ring upon the little finger of one hand; an onyx on the other. Broken up as he was in constitution, and, it might be said, in mind—but he had no mind to break up—and, padded in every limb; made up, in short, of flannel and wash-leather; his lordship, or his lordship's clothes, still had an air of well-bred decorum, almost to the point of foppery. When he stood, were it but for a moment, even upon his crutch, it was in an attitude, one foot advanced before the other; the noble art of bowing, now fallen wholly into disuse, and the last specimen of which, genuine, was, I suppose, to be seen in Beau Nash, was still possessed by his lordship in some perfection. He had also that quality, greatly degenerated among us, of giving up his sole attention, or seeming to give up his sole attention, to those who honoured him, not whom he was supposed to honour in receiving, but who honoured him in being his guests.

Captain Ashbrook, who appeared to form the connecting link between one age and another, attired himself, according to his custom, with a scrupulous attention to existing fashions, yet not in the extreme. There was, however, the precision of the military man in the nicety of a costume, which seemed, unconsciously to its wearer, to have something of a regimental cut about it. Lady Lovaine, as her quick dark eyes glanced upon her nephew, fancied that his fine hair was curled and dressed with more than usual caution this day: his eye was brighter; his cheek had a livelier tinge than usual. She rather rejoiced at it: she disliked Mrs. Waldegrave, and Mrs. Waldegrave's manœuvres; if he must marry a Miss Fortescue, Lady Lovaine hoped it would not be Mrs. Waldegrave's Miss Fortescue—"next to an old maid, she abominated an old maid's pet." She was not herself disposed to undertake the new office of match-making: indeed much of her natural rhetoric was daily employed in railing at matrimony, as a contract in which the advantage was all on the side of men; and she had a particular objection to it among the poor, looking, as she did, merely

at the immediate inconveniences of the wedded state; however, if such an accident should occur, as Captain Ashbrook's falling into love with Rosabel Fortescue, there might be many alleviating circumstances, although she did think her nephew would have been as well without marrying at all.

Rosabel, fortunately for Lady Lovaine's schemes, was looking to-day as well as any match-maker, interested in her, could desire. In conformity with her father's wishes—for he thought her too young to adopt every prevalent fashion—her hair, though turned back—for in that the laws of costume were fixed as those of the Medes and Persians—was not, however, powdered, but hung, in all its native richness of colour, in curls, about her neck, and was decorated, on the present occasion, with a bunch of violet-coloured ribbons at the top, a streamer or two descending from the topknot, and mingling with the chesnut tresses, to which such ornaments could add no beauty. Her dress, according to custom, was long waisted, and pointed in the front, without being confined by a band, and much after the present mode. The great difference was in the sleeve, which was tight,

without a single plait, and, reaching to the elbow, was garnished with ruffles, not, like Lady Lovaine's, deep, and hanging over the arm like the modern *seduisans*, but narrow, and quilled, as it were, more modestly than ostentatiously, upon the sleeve. Her gown was of a white sprigged muslin, with an apron of the same, clear, full, and starched; her dress, made high upon the shoulder, so as to give the form as narrow and taper an appearance as possible, was finished upon the top with a broad violet-coloured ribbon, which, fastened on the bosom with a large bow, served as a tucker. Rosabel at present wore no ornaments, except a narrow band of black velvet, from which a cross, suspended by a single strip, fastened round her throat, shewed to advantage the white, yet not bloodless, skin, and the roundness of her graceful neck. Timid, not awkward—for her forwardness of manner had always been provoked by Mrs. Waldegrave's tyranny, and was confined to her own circle,—Rosabel now modestly endeavoured to aid, at least, by being a good listener, the enjoyments of those who thus kindly entertained her with what seemed to her, disinterested benevolence.

Dinner passed away quietly, but not without its attractions to all parties. To Lady Lovaine it had the unsophisticated gratification of being necessary ; for her morning's exertions made her fully able to enjoy it. Lord Lovaine loved it also for its own sake ; he liked also to have some one, to whom to send the bottle round. Lady Lovaine was no patroness of the bottle, and watched every glass of Madeira which he took, and her evenings were frequently occupied in descanting upon certain imprudences of diet or beverage, which her lynx-eyes had observed at dinner. His lordship took advantage of the general flow of conversation, if conversation any thing could be called in which he took a part, to deviate from a course of sweet-breads, boiled chickens, and blanchmanges, to which the tyranny of domestic medicine subjected him. On the present occasion he was quite valourous.

“ Captain Ashbrook, some wine with you.—No, Wilson ; I don't take my lemonade to-day. My lady, you see, who has taken her diploma—he, he, he—has a conceit for my having this decanter by me, filled with toast

and water, and lemon-peel juice : so that I can take a glass of wine without—he, he, he—bringing on the gout—of Lady Lovaine’s wine, I mean. My lady, I’ll take a little bit of that fricandeau—do ye see ?—some gravy to it, if you please.”

“ There’s gout in that dish, my lord ; nothing so gouty as mushrooms. Ashbrook, I always admire the simplicity of your diet.”

“ Nobody ever dies of the gout,” said Lord Lovaine, courageously : “ it is quite a privilege to have it—eugh !” he added, almost unconsciously, as a twinge in his elbow reminded him that he possessed this privilege of the highly born. “ Your father, Sir John, subject to the gout, Miss Rosabel ?”

“ I think not,” replied Rosabel.

“ Mrs. Waldegrave, I am convinced, has a vast deal of suppressed gout about her,” said Lady Lovaine. “ She would be much the better for a regular attack—less irritable, and less irritating ; and so would all who have any thing to do with her.”

There was a silence of some minutes, which was broken by Lord Lovaine’s saying, with a

shadow of a bow, and an attempt at a smile to Rosabel, who, he thought, looked mortified by this attack upon her aunt—

“ I remember your mother, Lady Fortescue, a vastly fine woman, Miss Rosetta—Rosetta was her name, I believe—or Rosina.—No ? Bless me, I was thinking of the new afterpiece, and that sweet creature Miss—Miss—what—hey ? — Miss —— Aye ! Miss Phillips — my poor head!—aye, Miss Phillips:— it is Mrs. Robinson in *Perdita*, is it not ? ”

“ Take my lord’s plate away,” as if by accident, whispered Lady Lovaine to her butler.

“ It is my notion,” continued Lord Lovaine, quite astonished at his own powers of speech—“ excuse me, Miss Rosetta—but it is my notion that you have Sir John’s forehead—the Fortescue brow. Now, has any one ever told you that before ? Then I am right. Bless me have I done ? Have you done, Ashbrook ? ”

“ Ashbrook knows that your constitution like the affairs of the county, requires a scheme of retrenchment,” interposed Lady Lovaine.—“ I presume, Ashbrook, this leave of absence is not to last long, and you will be hurried away, like the rest of the world, soon ? ”

“ Lady Lovaine cannot endure seeing her

friends in a state of repose," thought Captain Ashbrook; and his manner was less bland than usual, as he replied—"I suppose so."

"And where will be your next destination?" enquired Rosabel—their eyes meeting as he answered his aunt's question.

"To America, I presume."

"To America! a most unhealthful climate," said Lady Lovaine: "the people there, besides being savages, which they are, have no notion of ventilation in their houses; they will have a temperature of twenty degrees outside, and one of a hundred within, their houses. Besides, they are nothing but a collection of rebels, thieves, vagabonds, and cut-throats."

"Miss Rosetta," interrupted Lord Lovaine, who, when once a new idea occurred to him, which was not an event of every day, rang changes upon it for a whole evening—"Miss Rosetta has her mother's dark hazel eye; at least, that is my notion. Is it yours, Lady Lovaine? There is a resemblance; I am confident of it."

"No one disputes it," said Lady Lovaine.—  
"Ashbrook, there will be just day-light enough, after you have handed me to the drawing-room, to show Miss Rosabel the pictures. My lord,

I have rung for Wilson to take charge of you. I suppose you are fond of pictures, Miss Rosabel ?”

“ I am indeed,” cried Rosabel, with a delight she could not conceal. She longed to explore the gallery with Captain Ashbrook ; and in a few minutes she found herself in a company of antiques : for the portraits, even of Lord and Lady Lovaine, could hardly be exempted from coming under that description. Their resemblances, painted some fifteen years before, had superseded those of their immediate predecessors, who hung, along with other worthies of the time of George the Second, to the right and to the left of the present occupants of Medlicote. The present Lord and Lady Lovaine afforded, in respect of dress, a kind of chronological continuation of the series. In the Peer, the curled wig and the full ruffle had yielded to the bag-wig, the tie, and stock ; a row of powdered curls, which had stood the full cannonade of an hour’s powder puffing, gave breadth and heighth to the brow of the present lord, whilst it could not impart expression ; and the imbecility of his small, light eye shone forth even upon canvass. He was in a

dress resembling a court suit, whilst a miniature portrait of Lady Lovaine was depicted to hang upon his breast, a sort of camera lucida representation of her own fierce self beside him.

Lady Lovaine was delineated in the period of her youth, but she had never been known to look under thirty. She was in a full costume, and it was a very full costume in the early days of George the Third ; the hair plaited, and festooned up behind, and festoons of satin, edged with pearl, hanging down from the cushion on her head, which was otherwise garnished with a plume of ostrich feathers of mixed colours. A bell hoop showed forth a petticoat too elaborate for description, and trigged out with bows of lace, festoons of beads, and other devices ; a large bunch of flowers stuck upon the left shoulder completed the furbelow. Her ladyship, too, wore, in conjugal reciprocity of feeling, the portrait of her lord, in large pearls ; not worn, indeed, “on high,” but “set with modest splendour in her ample zone.” Her bare hands and arms, for which she was famous, were surrounded with black velvet bands, a clasp upon each containing a small portrait. She was

emerging from a summer-house, mysteriously open in front, yet furnished with a red curtain—in the distance was her ladyship's favourite horse.

Captain Ashbrook did not attempt to arrest the attention of his fair companion long upon the portraits of his aunt and uncle, however valuable they might be to their owners; and he hurried over the whole series of family pictures with little boys in knee breeches, pink and white babies in the arms of their fond mammas, heirs apparent and co-heiresses, the seven ages of man and woman in every possible variety,—to show Rosabel some valuable originals of Vandyke or Rembrandt, or to point out such of his ancestors as had figured in war, or in any way adorned the annals of their country. His military taste was all apparent; and even Rosabel thought he expatiated too much and too long upon a plan of the fortifications of Hereford, which his ancestor, General Rudall, had held out in Cromwell's time. But there is nothing so soon caught by females as military ardour, contrary, as it is, to the tendencies of their sex.

“After all,” said Rosabel to Captain Ashbrook, “you are glad you have chosen the military profession, are you not?—I should be, I am sure, if I were you.”

“I was glad—I did enter into my first campaign with very great ardour; but, as a man advances in life, as he begins to estimate things by their intrinsic, not by their imputed, value—he longs to enjoy tranquil and domestic pleasures—to dwell among his own people—to plant the few laurel leaves which he may have gathered—at home.”

“It is evident what he is dwelling upon,” thought Rosabel, as they returned through an old deserted library and a billiard-room to the drawing-room: “why should I not hope that Charlotte may be the person?”

Lord and Lady Lovaine were both asleep, and neither of them were even partially aroused for some hours; and certainly not fully awake, before Rosabel, with the benefit of a full moon, attended within by Lady Lovaine’s maid and escorted without by Captain Ashbrook, on horseback, set off for Drayfield. It may be easily conceived, how innocently the intervening space was enjoyed by the two young people,

thus condemned to each other's society, in turning over books of prints ; after talking for half an hour over, but not concerning, a single engraving ; discussing books, balls, and battles, and—making themselves very comfortable indeed.

## CHAPTER XV.

“I can bear being told I am in the wrong, but tell it me gently. Perhaps I have been indiscreet.”

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGUE.

ON the following day, Rosabel was greatly startled by the appearance of her father driving to the door in a phaeton, and looking unusually austere and awful. He descended quickly; and, entering the little sitting parlour, said, “I wish you, Rosabel, immediately to return home with me—prepare yourself directly to do so: Howard and his nurse will be sent for presently.”

Rosabel obeyed in silence. Like the prisoner long habituated to one limited sphere, she had now begun to cherish her banishment; yet the natural love of events, to which the human mind is disposed, made her prepare for the change of place with alacrity, stimulated by curiosity. She was never too precise in her

attire, and was generally, with justice, accused of leaving every thing behind her. It was not, however, long before she found her way to the dairy to bid Mrs. Rivers a hasty adieu: the good lady was plunged to her elbows in curds and whey, and in an atmosphere so pure and cool, and with such a look of cleanly contentment, and with such a glow of cheerfulness on her broad bright face, that Rosabel, before saying farewell, paused for one moment to envy her. But there was little time for regrets, or even for the expression of gratitude; and Rosabel, well knowing that her father was not addicted to patience, any more than most of his sex, in regard to waiting, repaired quickly to him.

It was a glorious autumnal day, with a dash of frost in the air, sufficient to call forth the brightest bloom into the cheeks of beauty, and to tinge the purple cheeks of the plough-boy with a yet more vulgar red. Rosabel, as the phaeton drove slowly away from Drayfield, thought she had never seen the farm look so tempting: the team, hot from their morning's task, were just plunging their ponderous limbs, unfettered, into a dark but clear pool, which, fringed by willows, now bare, except here

and there a trembling yellow leaf, stretched along the side of the road. The long clear whistle of the plough-boy,—the faint sounds of the poultry yard,—the distant sheep bells on the height, and the prattling voice of Howard in the shrubbery, seemed to Rosabel like the sounds of departed peace, the requiem of passed contentment; such inconsistent beings are we, that the scenes which we have almost reviled, whilst constrained to abide in them, acquire a new, fictitious value in our eyes when the moment of separation arrives.

Sir John was perfectly silent as he drove his daughter through the lanes which led to Hales Hall; but he could not avoid noticing that Rosabel's head was turned incessantly backwards, in the direction of Medlicote, and, as the road wound another way, she leaned eagerly to catch the last glimpse of some distant object. He then began:—

“Rosabel, when I consented—though it was against my own judgment—at the persuasion of your aunts, and in compliance, I was told, with your own wish, to allow you to go to Drayfield, I thought I could rely upon your prudence, and your promise to me not to demean yourself by

childish and indiscreet conduct.—I am sorry to learn that I have been mistaken.”

“How, Sir?” enquired Rosabel, almost choaked with vexation at an attack so unexpected and unmerited; “what have I done?”

“Admitted, as I am informed, the visits of Captain Ashbrook, Mr. and the Miss Warners, and others; and, without permission, gone to Medlicote, a circumstance for which I do not altogether blame you, because I consider that Lady Lovaine is, in some measure, responsible for having tempted you there, unknown to your aunts and myself;—and, when there, you were seen, I understand, rambling about, in certain directions, with Captain Ashbrook. I am really concerned and surprised that Captain Ashbrook, a man whom I respect as a neighbour and as a gentleman, should induce you to do what he knows, in any case, would be unpleasant to me, and what seems to be annoying to your aunts, peculiarly, and, under present circumstances, to your sister.”

Rosabel knew not how it was, that the words “under the present circumstances” gave her more vexation than all the parental reproof

previously conveyed in her father's admonitory speech. She felt angry with herself beyond measure, for her deficiency in generous feeling; nevertheless, for some moments, she could only say to herself—

“It is so, then—it is a settled affair—Charlotte's happiness is certain—I am very glad—I ought to be—so—my aunts will, indeed, rejoice!”

Sir John perceived her abstraction, and was hastening to interpret it into an evidence of her conscious impropriety, when Rosabel, rousing herself, hastened to vindicate her conduct. Although she was afraid of her father, she had the greatest possible reliance upon his justice, and, even now, upon his affection: on whom else, indeed, had she to rely? If he did not love her, whom had she to care for her? There is an instinctive feeling in the minds of children, which leads them to believe that their parents must love them until parental misconduct, or evil councils, destroy this happy dependance. Rosabel loved better that her father should even look sternly upon her than that he should regard her proceedings with indifference; for if once such a calamity

as that were to happen to her, she should feel herself, indeed, a castaway. With a candour and simplicity to which Sir John was little accustomed in his elder daughter, whose character was of a close and cautious nature, Rosabel told her father every thing which had occurred to her during her residence at Drayfield; she explained even her own feelings to him, and accounted for her readiness to run into any society that offered, by the unfounded, perhaps, but natural impression, that she was not kindly, though perhaps justly, appreciated at home—that she was sent to be out of the way, during a season of enjoyment—and that no one cared for her, “except you, sir, and, perhaps, poor little Howard,” she added, as she finished.

Sir John, though the tear trembled in his eye, looked neither to the right nor to the left, as he replied to Rosabel’s defence. He was not a man to shew that he was melted by this appeal. He saw, indeed, in the expressions of his child, a manifest improvement in sentiment and principle; and he rightly judged, that a species of adversity which the acknowledged partiality of her aunts to her sister presented to her, was working its beneficial effects upon her character;

rendering her humble and grateful, and teaching her to rely upon herself for the creation of her own happiness : but the ordeal was severe, and Sir John, as a parent, could not but feel indignant at those by whom it was imposed. He restrained himself, however, but with the mere expression, that he was satisfied with Rosabel's explanation ; and the assurance, grave and measured, as was every thing he did, that the preservation of his affection, as well as the degree of esteem which she should receive from others, lay within the compass of her own power.

The result of her explanations to her father was, however, a determination on his part to permit her, henceforth, to enter into the society which the vicinity of Hales Hall afforded. This boon was no great grant, nor extended to a considerable range, the neighbourhood being by no means populous, nor what is usually termed gay. Like all other districts, it comprised, as it usually does, the envied and the envious : as in all country societies, usage had constituted a barrier — not at that period broken through by improved liberality on one hand, and intelligence and increased refinement on the other—between families of the first class,

and those of the second; a remnant of the feudal system which elevated the Allodial Lords into little monarchs, and caused the inhabitants of county towns to be regarded as beings of an inferior order; a crew of Pariahs, which no English Bramin ought to violate his caste by admitting in his fellowship.

The Warners, as it has been already stated, were not as yet ranked among the select families, who constituted what was entitled county society. Hitherto, however, the distance of Mr. Warner's residence from Hales Hall had prevented those inconveniences which an unequal acquaintance is often found to produce. Even Mrs. Waldegrave could be condescendingly civil to the Miss Warners when they had to ride twelve miles over to Hales Hall, to call upon Rosabel Fortescue; for Charlotte, with a prudence worthy of enconium, had never yet acknowledged the Miss Warners as her acquaintance. They came to see Rosabel; they were Rosabel's friends, and it was of no use her beginning an acquaintance with them—they could not expect Miss Fortescue to notice them; and it "was not desirable to sanction as Miss Fortescue's acquaintance those whom, in case of

her settling in the county, she could not visit." Such were the sentiments of Miss Fortescue and her aunts, when a change in affairs took place, in the very neighbourhood of Hales Hall.

"Sister!" said Miss Alice one morning, "I have something to tell you. Who do you think has taken Sir John Barker's place upon the Hill? Such neighbours! The Warners!"

"The Warners!" repeated Mrs. Waldegrave.

"The Warners!" echoed Charlotte in an accent of frigid contempt.

"Yes," resumed Miss Alice: "Mr. Warner has had a legacy, and is getting on in the world. He has been settled in the house for a fortnight; so you see how little we know how our neighbours get on. The Churchills have called upon them, and the Goodyers, and I hear the Percivals mean to do so, and of course they have had all their old friends from Cheverton—but I do suppose mean to give up those acquaintance now."

"And very right," said Mrs. Waldegrave.

"For I really don't suppose one could breathe in the presence of the Cheverton people," observed Charlotte, who, like most young persons

of shallow capacity, was out-doing her model; "but don't say any thing before Rosabel, aunt, for I fancy every thing goes again."

"I wonder what my brother means to do?" cried Mrs. Waldegrave, quite hurried and overcome by this event, so puzzling a conjuncture of affairs.

"And what Lady Lovaine will do?" said Alice, with a look of profound importance.

"It is very awkward for all of us, Charlotte, dear! I do not know which of us is to be pitied the most. I, as the present head of your father's house—so very conspicuous a situation—(however, we must all do what is thought to be right; if it is thought to be right to visit the Warners, the sacrifice must be made) or you, as Miss Fortescue, the future head of your father's, or of some other family; so much looked up to, as you must always be, my dear."

"Certainly," said Charlotte, conclusively. "Do you think it will be as well for me to ride over to Medlicote, aunt, to consult Lady Lovaine before we take any steps?"

"Why, no! my lord has the gout, and my lady has been so strange lately, she may take it

into her head to say she would call; and then, if she sanctions it, we must go, whether we will or not; and I should like to hear what the Prunells intend to do, before I quite decide."

"The Warners dined there the other day," said Alice.

"Did they! and who did they meet?" cried Mrs. Waldegrave, eagerly, as if the whole result of the consultation depended upon that one circumstance.

"That I forgot to ask," replied Alice.

"Forgot to ask! the very thing you should most have seen to—you may always judge of what people think of you by the persons they ask to meet you; being asked to dinner is nothing—and who to ask to meet the Warners, in case Sir John should ever have them to dinner, is the difficulty. Mrs. Warner, if she had been alive, was a passable sort of woman, to be sure, and of a tolerable family; but of another county: but then that is not known hereabouts: nobody asks who Mrs. Warner was, but what Mr. Warner was and *is*?"

"And *is*, indeed!" said Charlotte, with her cold, short blighting laugh—the laugh with

which she had often provoked Rosabel to the last pitch of irritation, in their sisterly disputes.

“Well, I am sure I don’t know what to do!” said Mrs. Waldegrave, as she quitted the room.

“Aunt Waldegrave is quite put out,” said Charlotte, calmly, without raising her head from her work.

Circumstances, however, arranged that knotty point which Mrs. Waldegrave had found too difficult to settle. Sir John himself—unaided by the counsels of the female part of the family, to whose advice he had, indeed, seldom recourse—had ridden over, three miles, to Mr. Warner’s new residence in person; and before Mrs. Waldegrave was at all sufficiently prepared for such a catastrophe, the call was returned. Mr. Warner had bustled through the suite of rooms with his eldest daughter on his arm: Amy and her brother had followed; luncheon had been ordered and even eaten, and the parties had taken leave and entered their carriage before Mrs. Waldegrave had wholly recovered from the shock, or could dive into the motives which had actuated her brother in this strange piece of condescension.

Like most ladies whose minds were but little exercised, Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice were prone to attribute motives of some peculiar character to every action, the intention of which they could not immediately develop ; and, in the course of sundry discussions, they arrived at the conclusion that Sir John was secretly countenancing some matrimonial scheme between Rosabel, and some member of the Warner family. In former days, before it was thought necessary to trouble woman-kind with much tuition, when the spelling-book was looked upon as chiefly useful, because it was the key to some book upon cookery, or to some circulating library—in those blessed days, dress was the study, love the occupation, and matrimony the object of single women. Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice, having all their lives been scheming for themselves in this matter, were now fully adequate to scheme for others. They wisely resolved to leave Sir John to himself.

“ My brother has a large family,” said Mrs. Waldegrave ; “ it is very natural that he should wish to part with some of them : it seldom happens that all the branches from the family stock can be unexceptionable. However, I have no

notion of Rosabel's marrying before Charlotte. In the first place, Captain Ashbrook must be brought to the point; he has been trifling with both the sisters, and he will, no doubt, make his election in choosing Miss Fortescue."

"Charlotte," replied Alice, "is by far the most of a lady of the two."

"Decidedly, sister; decidedly. Charlotte knows what is due to herself—Rosabel does not. My brother is right—young Mr. Warner will do well enough for Rosa; and, in London, there is no need, you know, of their being introduced to my connections—poor dear Mr. Waldegrave's connections;—nor here, to the Montagues, the Smiths, the Dickons's, or the Knowles's."

"It will be as well, sister, then," said Alice, "to allow Rosa to dine with the Warners on Tuesday; and we can join the ball in the evening, with Miss Fortescue. You know my brother has the road-meeting to attend to, and cannot dine at the Hall, nor Captain Ashbrook either."

"Rosabel will be too much set up, Alice," replied Mrs. Waldegrave, doubtfully; "the child is even now half beside herself. Really, a

brother's family is quite a charge ; no circumstances (however it was thought right, and one must do what one believes to be right), or, as I was going to say, no circumstances, sister, would induce me to take charge of other people's children, as poor dear Mr. Waldegrave used to say—" But her colloquy was interrupted, and poor dear Mr. Waldegrave's observation was lost to posterity.

It was Captain Ashbrook who broke in upon the sisterly tête-a-tête. This was his second call in the course of the same week ; and the two affectionate aunts could only ascribe one motive for such perseverance. Had they known all—had they been aware that Captain Ashbrook sauntered about the park—which, as a neighbour, he was privileged to enter—often met Rosabel in a certain direction, by a path which skirted a wood, and led to a gentle rise, whence she could just catch a glimpse of the gable end of Ashbrook House—little Howard, her sole companion—out of bounds altogether—no witness of her conduct—had she known this, she would have indeed thought a brother's family a charge. These brief meetings, of course, were wholly accidental.—It is so very awkward that

estates will join. And there had been an old usage, better honoured in the breach than the observance, of the Ashbrooks being at liberty to sport over the Fortescue grounds, and the Fortescues over Ashbrook manor. A gun is sometimes as good a pretext for a flirtation as a fan. Captain Ashbrook was always so afraid of alarming Miss Rosabel, that he looked around him many times before he took aim : but his dogs were sure to find her out, when in the most secluded parts of the park, which she had once considered as so lonely. Captain Ashbrook's four-footed companions were certain, several times a week, to come bouncing behind her, followed by himself, all anxiety to see what game they had started ; but without a single bird in his possession.

Then, on the other hand, Howard was so fond of the park ; he never would remain quietly in the pleasure-grounds ; every one was tired of him, except Rosabel, and she was obliged to give way to him for peace. Such was her explanation to Captain Ashbrook, in which he perfectly coincided ; and said it was natural for a boy to love guns and dogs ; and, indeed, Howard's taste for these manly posses-

sions became every day more decided. All day the nursery rang with the names of ‘Ponto and Presto ;’ while the poor old aunts were the only persons unenlightened. The very servants began to find out—although it were treason to say so—that Miss Rosa, and not Miss Charlotte, was the cause of Captain Ashbrook’s frequent visits, and his liking the Fortescue pheasants better than the Ashbrook pheasants. Even Rosabel herself had long since decided, in her own mind, from sundry feminine observations, that Charlotte was not the object of Captain Ashbrook’s visits. Had she seen that her sister’s feelings were interested, she had regretted this ; but Rosabel well knew that Charlotte’s heart was wholly safe.

By degrees, by these and other opportunities of meeting, Rosabel began to feel that all her burden of youthful care was lightened : no matter that aunts were peevish, and her sister cold—she had one new, firm, fond tie to life—with which they intermeddled not. Every vexation, each passing care, was alleviated ; and she had the happiness of being able to revere, as well as to love, the object of her early attachment. Captain Ashbrook was universally idolized ; his

demeanour was so frank and honourable, his acquirements so considerable, his manners so refined, that, with Rosabel's love for his society, there was mingled a deep enthusiasm for his character—such an enthusiasm as influences, in a great measure, the future intellectual features of a young female: for Rosabel now read every thing with his sentiments—saw every thing with his views; she strove to dive into his opinions, to conform to his ideas on all subjects: she now sought to interest herself with the studies from which she had hitherto revolted; she quickly found that she could not fully enjoy Captain Ashbrook's conversation, nor be an adequate companion to him, without some portion of that cultivation of mind which he possessed. She dwelt on every word which he uttered, and what was said, however trivial, however careless, furnished her with reflection for many an hour of ruminating solitude.

Certainly, the country is the place for cherishing all morbid affections of the mind, be they love, or grief, or hatred. The long, quiet morning, the still more unbroken evening, allow such emotions to assert, and to continue,

their full sway over the mind. When once excited, such passions find fuel every where ; and even the atmosphere of London, with its fogs and its crowds, cannot extinguish them. But to return to my narrative.

## CHAPTER XVI.

“ The haughty and opinionated will meet with the very contrary of what they expect, if, by such a carriage, they look for esteem.”—LA BRUYERE.

NOTHING in life is so comfortable as the certainty of one's own moral and intellectual superiority ; and one of its most agreeable effects is the confidence which it gives to condemn, in every detail, the practices of one's particular friends and nearest neighbours. Mr. and Miss Warner were peculiarly blessed in this respect ; and had the daily happiness of finding every thing wrong which their nearest neighbours, the Fortescues, considered right. Whilst the two families expressed the greatest good will and politeness for each other, and were, as Mr. Warner gave it out every where, on the best of terms, a gnome or sprite, hovering over the dinner or tea table of each mansion, might have heard colloquies of this description :

“What vulgarity those Warners sport,” was Miss Fortescue’s observation. “Of course, I was obliged to admire Miss Warner’s new bonnets ; but I never saw any thing so odious ! —just like them—antiquated, dowdy, Chevertonish.”

“And those shawls which they wore,” said Hubert, Sir John’s second son, on whom his father’s hopes chiefly rested, and who had now lately returned home from a public school ; “were they not something like horse-cloths ? —a relic of—”

“Mr. Warner’s stock in trade,” interposed Mrs. Waldegrave, with a faint, short, feline sort of laugh. I do believe nothing shews character more than a laugh ; a chapter might be written on the subject, as a supplement to Sterne’s Chapter upon Noses.

“I cannot think,” said Miss Alice, “whom they will contrive to muster at their party on Friday : surely Mr. Warner would be much better not to be giving parties—no married female to conduct them, and—”

“Oh, no, no, aunt,” said Hubert ; “for Heaven’s sake, let him do that ; ’tis the only thing worth knowing them for. I declare I would

not run the risk of having to bow to one of them in London, were it not for the chance of a good dinner there now and then."

"I hope," said Charlotte, as she fastened her netting-silk, "that Mr. Warner won't talk of 'in generally' at the head of his table."

"And that Miss Amy will not speak of riding out in a carriage," added Mrs. Waldegrave, "instead of driving out."

"I presume Rosabel will be in the third heaven," pursued Charlotte, calmly, "with her dear Miss Warners."

"Or in the third *Even*, as Squire Warner hath it," interrupted Hubert.

"No; now I don't believe he is quite so bad as that," said Aunt Alice, apologetically.

Such was the tone of the Fortescues; whilst Miss Warner, at her father's tea-table, held forth, touching her neighbours, thus:—

"I wonder Miss Fortescue chuses to go to church such a figure—absolutely in such a dress as my maid would not wear; and poor Rosabel trigged out in her mother's old things. I like Rosabel; but she is dreadfully untidy, and really does not care what she looks like."

“ She is such a fine girl, it does not much signify what she has on,” said Henry Warner, looking upon a newspaper, but his face suffusing as he spoke.

“ I think,” observed Mr. Warner, with magisterial dignity, “ that Sir John would do well not to allow that third son of his to be hanging and lounging about home—doing no good over at Cheverton, where he rides every day, as my clerk tells me, who meets him.”

“ He very often goes on commissions for his sisters,” said gentle Amy, drinking her tea very fast, and very hot.

“ It is quite melancholy,” resumed Miss Warner, “ that Sir John should allow his family to be so over-ruled, as they are, by those two very illiterate and narrow-minded women, his sisters ; positively, the younger ones have had no education at all ; and, as for Miss Fortescue, we all know the depth of her capacity ; then, poor dear Rosabel—might have been a very fine character, if—”

“ She *is* a fine character as it is,” said Henry, folding up the newspaper.

“ Sir John—though he *is* Sir John—a man

of family, and all that—I take to be a weak man, though he is very civil and friendly as a neighbour,” observed Mr. Warner.

“ He’s quite the gentleman ; don’t you think so ?—and a very handsome man,” cried Amy ; “ how much Rosabel and Mr. Hubert are like him : but, I am told,” she added, qualifyingly, “ that his partiality to his eldest son is as great as to his eldest daughter.”

“ Shameful !” exclaimed Henry.

“ Abominable !” said Phillis.

“ The effect of the law of entail,” said Mr. Warner. “ Birthright, in these old families, is all in all. Sir Phillip, that will be—an idle spendthrift—will come into a handsome estate, and the younger branches be left, probably—”

“ Without a shilling !” said Phillis.

“ But that consideration ought to make a father kindest to his younger children during his life-time,” observed Henry.

“ Law, my dear Henry, is all-in-all ; and, I may say, it is second nature—to me it is—although I never had the advantage of a legal education ; and I must say, that I quite approve

of making a family, although the principle is one of feudal times."

"I suppose it is a relic of feudal times," said Phillis, "that all the congregation in Hales church are to wait, standing in their pews, until Miss Fortescue or her father chuse to move out, after service.—Is that to your taste, sir, in a house of prayer?"

"My dear Phillis," said her father, "we are not to expect every body to see with our eyes, or to judge in the way you and I would judge of things. Our notions, I believe, are not of the common sort; but there was Mr. Henry, here, defending this very custom, in a company of his friends, the other day."

"Not exactly defending it, sir; I was only saying that it allowed me more time for my meditations, more leisure to admire the noblest works of Nature—two very lovely girls."

"Two!"—exclaimed Phillis, indignantly—"why, you do not admire Miss Fortescue, surely?"

"Her eyelashes are too light," said Amy.

"I am sure her figure is very good," argued Henry.

“ Too thin and stiff,” said Phillis ; “ her clothes look as if they were plastered on her.”

“ And never, never,” continued Amy, “ does one see the slightest variation on Miss Fortescue’s countenance—not even a blush—”

“ Which cannot be said of Rosabel,” added Phillis ; “ though I am very partial to her, I could wish her to blush less—the defect of her complexion is its being a little too high.”

“ Not a shade — not the quantum of a shade of a rose-leaf too high,” cried Henry : “ though vivid, it is delicate, varying, even fleeting. You may criticize Miss Fortescue, Phillis ; but do leave her sister alone.”

“ I think it is high time to stop proceedings,” said Mr. Warner. “ Do not set your young heart upon a Fortescue, Henry ; there are plenty of county matches better than that ; and when you see your sister so respected and noticed—courted by all the neighbouring families—”

“ I do not aspire to any one,” said Henry Warner, in a tone between sullenness and dejection ; “ allow me, sir, to admire.”

“ Oh, certainly, sir, certainly young gentleman. You show good breeding in admiring

one of a certain quality ; you don't degrade yourself by falling in love, even hopelessly, in that quarter. Why it should be hopelessly, I do not know : Miss Rosabel might do worse. But, to tell you the truth, Sir John, though my friend, has a large, needy family, badly brought up, and—”

“ I—I,” said Phillis, “ though I have the greatest affection for Rosabel, would rather see Henry die an old bachelor than have her for a wife—out of such a family—brought up with such ideas. But, look ! just see—talk of people, and you know the old proverb—there they are !—Rosa and her brother, riding over to see us—coming now up the hill—Miss Fortescue and Mrs. Waldegrave behind. Amy, run out to meet them, and say that I am at home, and how delighted I shall be to see them.”

It was in this state of affairs, when the intimacy between the Fortescues and the Warners was supposed to be at its height, that Mr. and Miss Warner had decided to give a dinner party. All the Hales Hall party were invited, and secured imprimis : and then came the anxieties of getting suitable people to meet them.

Conscious of being a little looked down upon by their neighbours, the Miss Warners were extremely anxious that their worthy father should not sully the gentility of their table by the admixture of any of his old family friends upon the occasion: the lawyer from Cheverton, for instance; or that anomalous compound animal, half banker, half linen-draper, whom you shook hands with at a side door in the capacity of a gentleman, and bought a yard of tape from, at the front entrance, his shop. All this fastidiousness was as metaphysics to the worthy magistrate, whose notion of a dinner party was a good feast, and a table crammed with as many guests as it would hold. The refinements of modern exclusiveness had not as yet disturbed the good, comfortable, vulgar enjoyment with which a good dinner inspired him.

His daughters, however, knew better, and were aware, that their rise in society would be for ever blasted, were they to mix, with irreverent hand, the exalted Mrs. Waldegrave and her clan with their cronies the Miss Olivers, the belles of Cheverton, and even with some of the card-playing, half-county, half-town ladies of that borough, who sprang from a country stock,

but had degenerated into town residents. No—it was those standing dishes the Goodyers, Churchills, Smiths, Dickons's, and Percivals, established county people, who were in the habit of meeting each other in a round of state dinners, from January until December, who must be invited to meet the Fortescues.

How unlucky!—the Goodyers were engaged; had been so for half a year, to celebrate a marriage anniversary, fifteen miles off: the Churchills were going to Bath: the Smiths and Dickons's had all bad colds. The Percivals alone accepted the invitation. What was to be done? the table must be filled up; and then there was a long discussion about who would, and who would not, do to meet the Fortescues. In this matter, Phillis, who pretended to despise such weaknesses, was by far the most hyper-critical: Amy was anxious to have some young men. Henry some young ladies; and Mr. Warner took the opportunity of thrusting in a few of his own especial favourites—friends of thirty-years' standing; the very antiquity of whose acquaintance with him at once proclaimed the origin of his family. Some persons there were, it was true, of almost suitable condition, who

might have been invited ; but then, would it do to ask them a week after the rest ? as they might or might not hear that the Fortescues had been asked a week ago, and that the Goodyers, Churchills, Smiths, Dickons's, &c. had refused ?

At last, however, the table was filled : Henry had a parson friend or two from College. It was decided to have some of the half-pay officers from Cheverton—hungry men, always disengaged—who looked and behaved like gentlemen, to the extent of one bottle each ; and there were some odd-and-end people, and a stray single lady or two, staying on visits hereabouts, that would look creditable. Miss Atkins, for instance, who was only on a visit at Cheverton, had been staying lately in town, knew Mr. Sheridan, and had dined with Mrs. Piozzi, and had rather a literary turn herself—not that the Fortescues affected literature, but they must know that it gave persons a certain rank in society.

Every arrangement was, therefore, at last completed ; when, lo ! one gloomy morning there came notes from the Fortescues : Miss Fortescue was so sorry, some particular friends of

her father were coming, the very day of Mr. Warner's party, to the Hall, and it was not thought right that Miss Fortescue should be out, &c. Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice must decline for the same cause. Their regrets were chastened by a dash of Fortescue dignity, as much as to say, "the honour would have been too great for you ; we withhold it, and you have no right to complain." Sir John, through Rosabel, begged his best compliments to Mr. Warner, and the arrival of his friends would not have prevented him — for he meant to have the honour of introducing, and now hoped to be allowed to substitute his very old and valued friend, Mr. Lermont, formerly in His Majesty's civil service, in a high official department, in his place—but Sir John was grieved to find, that the Meeting of the Trustees of the Roads, at Newport, had been fixed for that day, and as Chairman he must attend, &c.

Before this blow was recovered, there came a note from Captain Ashbrook, full of unfeigned concern, that the necessity of meeting his Colonel, twenty miles off, on that very day, upon regimental business, quite indispensable, would prevent his waiting upon Mr. Warner at dinner ;

but that, as he understood from the young ladies, there was to be a little dance in the evening, he should ride back, as fast as possible, in hopes of being in time for it, &c. &c.

To put off the party were impossible, however much to be desired; for messengers must be sent ten miles in that direction, and six miles in that, and the two half-pay officers were never to be caught or overtaken; they were always at some ball, or some town or another, and it would be endless collecting and inviting the same party again. "And after all," said Phillis, "now the compliment is paid, I am quite as well pleased Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice don't come. We shall be more at our ease."

"And Rosabel comes," said Amy, "and Mr. Hubert."

—"So that we shall have quite the best part of the family," added Henry.

"As to the pleasure of the thing," said Phillis, "I think little of these great acquaintance; and I consider the Olivers quite as well in their way as the Fortescues."

Henry and Amy were silent.

Mr. Lermont, who furnished the heads of the Fortescue family, at this time, with their ex-

cuse, had, mean time, arrived at the Hall. He had been very early in life known to Sir John, who had received from him some kindness, which Sir John's generous nature could never forget, and which was now remembered when the power to benefit had passed away from his old friend. Mr. Lermont was twenty years Sir John's senior, and had, for years, filled some official situation, in which he had enjoyed considerable patronage, but from which he had retired in embarrassed circumstances. He was one of those benevolent persons whose life is passed in performing some good action, but who have the unlucky knack of doing more harm than good. 'Though his ability to assist the humble, by his interest with the great, had now much declined, he still lived in the delusive idea, that his influence was considerable, his good word effectual. Some old, and steady, and high-born friends there were, who, by their undiminished respect, and desire to please him, contributed to flatter his virtuous weaknesses, and to make him still believe himself all-powerful : and, among these, one of the kindest, and most respectful, was Sir John Fortescue.

The news of Mr. Lermont's intended arrival,

was succeeded, in the course of the same day, at Hales Hall, by the intelligence, that the Goodyers, the Churchills, the Smiths, and Dickons's, those telegraphs of Mrs. Waldegrave's movements, had all declined Mr. Warner's invitation.

"Then I am sure, if Miss Churchill cannot dine there, Miss Fortescue cannot," said Charlotte; "don't you think so, aunt?"

"My dear, I would not, on any account, do a thing which the Goodyers and these other people think beneath them. One must always do what one believes to be right; and I cannot believe it to be right to go. Rosabel, you can go, my love; and Hubert: I do not consider it quite the thing for Miss Fortescue to visit at the Hill, until we see what other people do."

"Certainly not," echoed Aunt Alice.

And the excuses were speedily sent, expedited by the further intelligence that Captain Ashbrook was to be at a distant part of the county on that day; which was, indeed, a powerful additional reason, and fatal to the brilliancy of Miss Warner's dinner party.

At length, the inauspicious day arrived; and, like many inauspicious days, turned out better

than was anticipated. Rosabel, having the good fortune, at last, to have worn out her mama's, her aunts', and her sister's old gowns, was indulged with a new dress, and set off in all the consciousness of good looks, and a thorough determination to enjoy herself. Mr. Lermont, who had furnished so convenient a pretext for the old ladies, was resolved to go also. He had never been noticed for attention to his attire, which had been, ever since the death of a beloved wife, black ; of a cut as obsolete as her memory now was. He was what is usually termed a very plain man ; his face was of a bright scarlet, which deepened into crimson upon any exertion. His eyes were blue, and kind, but not intellectual. It were difficult to say which of the rest of his features might be termed the plainest. He had not even the appearance of a gentleman, notwithstanding his having lived all his life in good society ; and his whole demeanour was so faulty, as to be only redeemed from positive disagreeableness upon further acquaintance ; when the excellence of his motives, the purity and goodness of his heart, atoned, and more than atoned, for all external defects. From infants he had

known and loved the young Fortescues. Rosabel's earliest recollections were of his scattering sugar-plums over the nursery table, and calling them snow; and Hubert's, the boy-like pleasure which he had in stealing the old gentleman's cane, and Mr. Lermont's saying, upon discovering the thief, "well, well, I have bought you another; so you will not take mine away again." Since those days of indulgence and delinquency, the elder of these three individuals had lost a wife and an only child, and had encountered all the misery of broken-down fortunes and impaired strength; and Rosabel and Hubert had also been deprived of an indulgent mother: but, as yet, life's troubles had scarcely begun with them, nor did they know the full value of that counsellor and friend, who, with all her errors, could, in some cases, never be supplied to them.

Hubert, after spending an hour and a half at his toilet, and keeping Rosabel and Mr. Lermont waiting, until even the gentle spirit of the latter began to rise, came down stairs in the full dress and full curl at that period adopted on visiting occasions, and looking, and conscious of looking, as handsome as his own vain heart

and the vain heart of Rosabel could desire. They were much alike, and Rosabel might have played Viola to his Sebastian ; and Hubert was, as yet, untainted by the world's more serious corruptions ; his light heart knew nothing but her vanities ; his ambition was at present honourable, his hopes of future distinction in the military profession high ; his feelings were generous and affectionate, although ungoverned. What an object of present pride for a parent to look upon ! How grievous were the fall of so promising a nature ! the blight of such hopes ! the ruin of one now so happy and so guiltless !

Happy, however, for the present, Rosabel and her brother, and their elderly friend, were ushered into Mr. Warner's drawing-room. The party, notwithstanding all disappointments, was by no means a small one ; for Mr. Warner, regretting that a good dinner should not be eaten, had filled in all vacancies, notwithstanding the remonstrances of Phillis. The room was awed into a temporary silence as the Fortescue party entered—a silence broken only by Mr. Warner's enquiries :—"How is my worthy friend SIR John ? SIR John gone to the road meeting ? Unfortunate ! Most happy, sir, to

have the honour of seeing you—most happy, sir, indeed. Phillis, my dear, Mr. Lermont, a valued friend of Sir John's. This is my daughter, sir ; and this young lady, ditto ; this other one, ditto ; and ditto to two others in the nursery. So you see, Mr. Lermont, we boast as many olive branches as your friend *Sir* John.

“—We have not quite the party we should have wished to meet you,” in a low tone. “The worthy gentleman to your right is a son of Mars. Stirring times these, Mr. Lermont : another war soon. Our friend Captain Ashbrook expects to be ordered off soon ; again to the New World, I fancy.

“Miss Rosabel, you are quite blooming to-day—quite a miniature likeness of Sir John, Mr. Lermont ?”—

“And, like most miniatures, a little flattering,” replied Mr. Lermont, with a remnant of old gallantry.

“—Of Sir John in his best days.—Phillis, are we ever to have dinner ? ’Tis as bad as attending on a grand jury, I declare. Talking of juries, Mr. Lermont, allow me to introduce to you my son, Mr. Henry Warner, student of

the Inner Temple, and speedily, *Deo volente*, to be called to the Bar—not as a prisoner—he, he!—but as a pleader: a profession which I very much regret, Mr. Lermont, not having pursued; it being my own wish, but, unluckily, contrary to the desire of my progenitor and progenitrix.”

“Your father was not himself in the profession, I presume, sir?” enquired Mr. Lermont.

“Why—no. — Amy, my dear, see what those people are about. Never can get dinner up, nowadays, Mr. Lermont, as we used to do, when our good mothers went down to see the first dish carried in themselves.”

Mr. Lermont bowed in silent acquiescence. He gave up his own accuracy upon the subject; but he had not remembered that it was a custom.

“And now, Henry, you hand down Miss Percival. Mrs. Percival, allow me. Mr. Lermont, excuse my giving you one of my daughters: ladies are a scarce commodity to-day—am sorry I can do no better for you. Gentlemen, you must pair off as well as you can. Captain Phillimore, Miss Rosabel Fortescue—

who is very partial to the profession, I believe," said Mr. Warner, very pointedly, looking at her, after the procession, with funereal solemnity, had marched down stairs, and seated themselves.

"Phillis was right," thought Henry Warner; "her colour is certainly too high on some occasions."

"Your brother, Mr. Hubert there, knows to what I refer—a bit of a favourite, is he not?"

Rosabel, quite relieved, smiled assent; and, as she leaned forward, a row of sun-burnt, fox-hunting looking faces leant forward to look at her.

If good manners consist in setting people at their ease, Mr. Warner certainly excelled in that respect. In a few minutes, the clatter of spoons and forks was exceeded by the universal buz of conversation which ran round the table. Rosabel, who had outlived her days of childish effrontery, and was emerging into the middle period of bashfulness, sat back, and looked around upon the company. It seemed to her that they were different to those whom she had been in the habit of seeing occasionally, though she could not define in what the differ-

ence consisted. They were equally well dressed, and fully as much at their ease ; but it was an ease which repelled female timidity, and made her long to retire into a corner : it was an ease connected with a perfectly good understanding with oneself : and yet there must have been a consciousness of something wanting, as the more aspiring of the party took every opportunity of raising themselves in general estimation, by some indirect boast. Rosabel thought she had seldom heard so many great names brought forward for such slight occasions.

Whilst Rosabel thus made her comments, Hubert was happy in paying his devoirs to the fair daughter of his host, Amy, who seemed perfectly insensible to the presence of many other of her usual train, and left even both the military men to Phillis, who was in general thought too clever, by Amy's beaux, for their taste. Mr. Lermont was eating and praising every thing, all benevolence and all warmth ; only he could not give up his political prepossessions to the democratic portion of the party ; for at that time the spirit of democracy prevailed, in a very uncommon degree, among the middling

ranks of society ; and in this he was borne out, to his heart's content, by the military gentlemen.

Mr. Warner had, or created to himself, an arduous duty at the bottom of the table ; for he was what is vulgarly termed a fidget, and his official functions had given him a taste for interfering in every thing. He suspended the labours of the carving knife from time to time, to discipline his troops, as he called them—a body guard consisting of his men servants, creatures who looked as if they had jumped out of smock-frocks, or fustian jackets, into their liveries. The modern improvements in the management of the table had not then rendered obsolete, neither had they entirely banished, even in good society, the necessity of some directions from the top and bottom of the table ; and, as Mr. Warner observed, aside, to his confidential clerk, whom he had squeezed in on his left, “ since he had been a widower, every thing had been left to him :” and, indeed, the duties of hospitality, in his opinion, rendered a little bustle essential.

“ Come, John, look sharp ; clear away fast. Where is James ? What are you all about ?

—The tarts there, Peter ; make all uniform—  
balance the dishes.—What ! no hot plates ?  
—all frozen ? — How's this ? all's not right  
below, Miss Warner.”

## CHAPTER XVII.

“ Oh, how this spring of love resembleth  
 The uncertain glory of an April day ;  
 Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,  
 And bye-and-bye a cloud takes all away !”

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

ROSABEL retired from the dinner table, fatigued, rather than excited, and beginning to agree with her aunts that she was as yet too young for parties. The drawing-rooms were, however, cleared for a dance, and the sounds of Miss Warner's harpsichord, accompanied by the wailing notes of the fiddle, reminded Rosabel forcibly of the evening when she had first heard the sounds of merriment under Mr. Warner's roof, and had first met Captain Ashbrook. She felt grateful to him, grateful to the Warners, that they had received her into their friendship, after that act of early imprudence, to which, indeed, her young friends never alluded ; and, whilst they were not, perhaps, companions altogether to her taste, they

had, as she thought, a claim upon her friendship which could never be dispensed with.

It was indeed, as Mr. Warner said, a house-warming. Fires blazed in every room, candles burned,—tea, coffee, and hot negus, sent up their fragrant steam. A lively tune struck up, and Rosabel found herself quickly engaged to open the ball with Mr. Henry Warner; whilst Amy and Hubert, too happy, stood next to them. Miss Warner meantime headed another set, with Mr. Lermont, who was too gallant a character to suffer his host's daughter to miss this attention from himself. Like most elderly gentlemen, he danced in capital time, and performed his steps with great exactness—bowed as he turned each lady—and showed off, to full perfection, that virtue of the old school, a benevolent attention to the happiness of others. Rosabel's eyes were affectionately fixed upon the good old man, when a rumour that Captain Ashbrook had entered the room, made her turn her head another way.

Rosabel was dancing with Henry Warner; but Captain Ashbrook must have been blind, if he had not observed that every look and thought were directed towards himself:—he

saw it, indeed, with the deepest interest and delight; new views of happiness were opening upon him: after nine or ten years of active duty, in an arduous profession, he conceived himself entitled to retire to a life of peace and of utility at home, should inclination or duty prompt him to adopt that agreeable alternative. Like most men of virtuous habits and kind dispositions, he wished to marry, and to settle upon his own estate:—and to this there appeared to be no obstacle. His fortune was already large, and he had every prospect of succeeding to the estates and title of his uncle, before the progress of years should prevent him from being able to enjoy such additional honours. It is true, that he had hitherto looked to an honourable career in his profession as the course in life which, of all others, he would chuse; but, after a two years' residence at home, new interests and wishes would spring up, and it was allowable and natural that they should be indulged.

Under these circumstances, Captain Ashbrook had become attached to Rosabel, without any other anxiety on the subject than the doubt of a full return. For he considered that a young

lady in her situation, unkindly treated as she was at home, might be apt to mistake gratitude for love, or to construe a desire to be emancipated from domestic controul into a decided preference. His was not the impetuous fancy of a boy, who would carry off the prize at any risk; but the refined, and steady, strong attachment of a man of reflection and experience, tenacious, like all persons of delicacy, as to a full and sincere return; and, like all the sentiments of matured and cultivated minds, far deeper, far more intense, than the flickering prepossessions of extreme youth. Perhaps, no man is ready to fall in love until he is thirty:—and it is probably owing chiefly to this,—that women have, in general, a far better chance of felicity in selecting men a good deal older than themselves, as husbands, than when they trust their happiness with men neither older nor wiser than themselves, and who have not yet learned to estimate, as it should be estimated, the female character.

Rosabel had exchanged Mr. Henry Warner as a partner for Captain Ashbrook, when a rumour that Sir John was arrived, again drew her attention to the door. Her father had been

standing there for some minutes; and as she met his glance, it seemed to her that she had, on the present occasion, nothing to fear from his displeasure. She was relieved, because she remembered his cautioning her not to cultivate an intimacy with Captain Ashbook, which might, under present circumstances, be unpleasant—and yet why unpleasant?—to Charlotte. But Sir John's feelings, as he gazed upon his daughter, were any thing but those of disapprobation. It was some years since he had seen her dance; and as she entered into that diversion with all the elasticity of youth, her father's eyes were moistened with delight and pride. Before, he had seen her only as a child; but now she was rising into womanhood, the playfulness of a girl exalted by a something of modesty and dignity, and an expression of intelligence mingled with the beaming sweetness of her laughing eyes. She was one upon whom a parent's gaze might well be riveted. 'The Spectator' mentions a pretty incident of this sort—doubtless, borrowed from life—for what father's or mother's heart could not supply a thousand such passages?

Sir John looked, and looked again, at

Captain Ashbrook and his daughter—and a mist seemed to be cleared away from his mental vision. If he had not been told that it was Charlotte, to whom Captain Ashbrook was paying his attentions, he should have said that it was Rosabel—not that he would have thought much upon the subject; men of a certain description, grave men of business, and particularly fathers, are very obtuse in such matters. The days of imagination are over with them; and they wonder what their sons and daughters mean by such fooleries as falling into love, and why they cannot be happy as they are. Mr. Warner, in this respect, resembled Sir John—both these gentlemen being deprived of that mediating character, a wife, who, to pave the way to certain proposals, can take opportunities of hinting that “Mr. A. is looking very kindly upon Miss B.”—“William is riding over very often to see Susan”—“Captain D— calls very frequently—supposes either for Ellen or Henrietta.” By such hints the mind of that blind mortal, a father, is generally enlightened, though it is often a difficult task to instil some notions into it. Sir John, somewhat puzzled, and thinking more on the subject of

love than he had done for five and twenty years, drove silently home with Mr. Lermont, Rosabel, and Hubert; nor did he hear the praises which good Mr. Lermont was lavishing, in the plenitude of his kindness, upon Mr. Warner and his family, down to the little ones, who came in for almonds and raisins after dinner.

Sir John felt, or endeavoured to feel, the same affection for both his elder daughters. He had been happy when he heard that Charlotte was thought likely to make so good a settlement as a marriage with Captain Ashbrook might be considered. He thought he might even be better pleased, if Captain Ashbrook's choice fell upon Rosabel, so that Charlotte were not disappointed. His own circumstances had been for many years in a great degree embarrassed; his eldest son had been very extravagant, and was still a burden upon his father: Hubert, alone, seemed likely to get out into the world advantageously, and to relieve his father of any expense for him; for he had already obtained a commission. Under these circumstances, it was, indeed, desirable that Sir John should marry his daughters advantageously.

It so happened that Mr. Lermont and Mrs. Waldegrave met, in innocent tête-a-tête, the following morning before breakfast. Good Mr. Lermont was full of the events of the foregoing day:—"Mr. Warner was so hospitable, the Miss Warners so comely and affable;" but no one looked to his mind so well as his favourite Miss Rosa; "and it is my fancy, Mrs. Waldegrave, that Captain Ashbrook is of the same opinion; and that he looks very kindly upon my young friend. But, indeed," added the old man, his ruddy face growing rubicund as he spoke, "who can wonder at that? You're silent—Ah, my dear madam, it requires no conjuror to guess that you're fearful of appearing too proud—too fond, as, indeed, most aunts and uncles are. It was a common observation of my dear, late, lamented mother, that aunts were more apt to spoil their nieces, even than mothers their daughters."

"Your mother, sir?" cried Hubert, in astonishment—had you a mother? I mean to say, within the last forty years or so?"

"My worthy, and I will add, since you must have it so, my venerable mother deceased just three years ago; and it's not probable that I

should forget her sayings and her old saws directly.—But to come back to the point,—Miss Rosa's far too young to be married as yet ; but then it would be expedient for her to be looking forward to it."

"That all women do in good time," observed Hubert.

"But, I presume," said Mrs. Waldegrave, "it is Miss Fortescue's turn to be thought of first ; and I suppose, sir, you would, in justice, in propriety, wish it to be so ?"

"Certainly—that is, if the gentlemen and the young ladies are of the same mind," replied Mr. Lermont.

"I wish to Heaven he *would* take Charlotte," said Hubert. "She's grown mighty high and fine lately—can't associate with this person—can't notice that—must'nt sanction a third—so that altogether, with this handful of acquaintance that we have, we have not half a dozen acquaintance worth knowing."

"You forget, Hubert," said Mrs. Waldegrave, the Churchills, the Goodyers—"

"The Smiths, and Dickons's, and the Percivals," added Aunt Alice, eagerly.

"Pshaw!—toujours perdrix—all as old as

Methusalem, and as old-fashioned as Moses—the Churchills, a stupid old couple, who have not imbibed a new idea for these twenty years—the Miss Goodyers, two old maids as stiff and thin as a pair of silver candlesticks—the Percivals, fat easy people, always half asleep—moving bolsters—talking feather-beds!”

His two aunts were struck dumb with horror and amazement.

“ I am shocked, Hubert, to hear you talk so of your father’s family friends,” exclaimed Aunt Alice, as soon as she could regain her breath, and almost gasping.

“ —Of the proper set—and the only set in which you ought to visit, Hubert,” added Mrs. Waldegrave.

“ And of some very worthy persons too, I dare to say,” said Mr. Lermont; “ but young gentlemen of Master Hubert’s age are apt to be particular.”

“ When you have seen as much of the world as we have,” continued Aunt Alice—

“ And as much good society,” added Aunt Waldegrave—

“ And as many years, and as much wisdom,

Aunt Alice," said Hubert.—" And then those stupid old Lovaines," he began again—

This was absolute sacrilege ; and though Hubert, a spoiled, bold youth, might usually say any thing, the person of Lord Lovaine and " my lady " were sacred as Majesty itself. Mr. Lermont saw the lowering storm, and hastened to avert it, by bringing back the conversation to an agreeable subject.

" Well, grant that Miss Charlotte's to be married first," he said (laying his finger on Mrs. Waldegrave's arm); " for I always commend, in this respect, the conduct of Sir Thomas Moore, our first lay-chancellor—high-chancellor, who paid his court to two gentlewomen, and married the elder, though he preferred the younger ; but he considered that the elder sister's feelings might be wounded if he married her younger sister first: and who knows but that Captain Ashbrook may act in the same gentlemanlike way."

" The greater fool he, if he does," said Hubert.

" Captain Ashbrook, if he has eyes, ears, senses, must prefer Charlotte," said Mrs. Waldegrave—" Rosabel is not fit to be the

wife of a sensible man, and is so immeasurably behind her sister."

"So much less of a lady," interposed Alice—the usual burden of her song.

Mr. Lermont fidgetted, and turned about from one sister to another, too polite to contradict, too sincere to agree, and too anxious to assist and benefit all parties, to drop the subject; and the good old man could not be persuaded, against his reason, that marriages were to be made by the rule-of-three, or that Captain Ashbrook would fall in love at Mrs. Waldegrave's bidding."

"I'll tell you what, good ladies—I am fond of Miss Rosa, and I am equally fond of Miss Charlotte, too,"—this was one of those amiable little fibs allowed by the old school of minor morals,—“and one may suit one taste—and one, another. Miss Charlotte's fair and delicate—slight and genteel—I admire her vastly—she's more, doubtless, to many people's taste than Miss Rosabel,—who's quite a gay, random, thoughtless little lass,” he continued, his manner warming into a natural enthusiasm as he spoke. “She is not by near so composed a person as her sister; but she's just such a gene-

rous, lively, artless little body, that every one loves!—and I do, I am sure,” he concluded, as he walked to and fro, “for her own sake—for her good father’s—for her poor mother’s, whom she much resembles.”

“My mother was a good deal taller,” said Hubert, in a serious, subdued tone, “and much handsomer, I know.”

“My poor dear sister was accounted a beauty—which no one can mistake Rosa to be,” said Mrs. Waldegrave, “especially as she has no manners; but she improves, and, all things being over-looked and forgotten—the story to which I allude will do for our private ear, sir—Rosa might have her chance with Captain Ashbrook; but then, we rather suspect she has set her heart in another quarter, somewhere to the eastward,” she added, looking towards Mr. Warner’s new residence.

“Aye, sure! Well, I thought I observed something of that,” said Mr. Lermont, stopping short: “he’s a fine creature too, and very well behaved, and well-minded as to his politics too! he took part with me in our disputes after dinner, as to the tea question, when—”

“Young Warner I suppose you are thinking

of, sir?" said Hubert; "you are not fixing upon the widower for my sister, are you? No—leave the old fellow and his dozen of children for Aunt Alice here."

"Good patience, Hubert!"—

—"If my brother would ever consent," interposed Mrs. Waldegrave.

"Consent!—could he have the heart to refuse?" said Mr. Lermont. "And depend on my good offices, madam, if all be convenient, and if the young gentleman prove worthy of Rosabel. Ah! who could but be kind to her! There she comes, bounding along, with the child in her hand—God bless her very heart!—how like she steps to her father!"—and the worthy gentleman hastened out of doors to meet his young favourite.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

“ And here we wander in illusions ;  
Some blessed power deliver us from hence ! ”

COMEDY OF ERRORS.

IT cost Mr. Lermont some hours of reflection, how to forward the supposed wishes of his young friend Rosabel, whose interest with her father he understood to be at a low ebb—a circumstance attributable, according to Mrs. Waldegrave, to Rosabel's early acts of insubordination ; especially to her flight from an indulgent home. Mr. Lermont listened to all the details of the case given him by Mrs. Waldegrave, with repeated exclamations of “ that was wrong, indeed ; poor thing, she's misled, you see—very imprudent—a sad business, poor dear ! Well, you brought her home again, and all was forgiven—that's right.”

Having heard all this, it became evident to him—first, that Rosabel had, from that very

period felt a considerable interest in young Henry Warner ; which had been fostered by her intimacy with his sisters ; brought to a crisis by his accident at the farm ; and, finally, blown into a flame at Mr. Warner's house-warming. This conviction accounted for Rosabel's anxiety to go to the party at the Hill, and for many other little observations on her part on the family there. " She loves them all, poor thing," thought Mr. Lermont, " and why should she not?—they are none of them in the leather way now ; and, if Rosa can make up her mind to it, our objection would be, as the old song says, ' all leather and prunella.' "

Then, as to Captain Ashbrook, it was evident, according to Mrs. Waldegrave, that he was looking after one or other of the young ladies, and all the country gave him to Miss Fortescue ; and it would be very hard upon her, poor girl, to see her younger sister preferred by both—the only two beaux in the neighbourhood. So, although Mr. Lermont did not give up the opinion, that Captain Ashbrook had a little preference for Rosabel, he quite agreed with Mrs. Waldegrave as to the propriety of putting Miss Fortescue forward upon

all occasions in his company. Indeed, the worthy gentleman had such a confidence in his own influence, which it was his weakness to think paramount, that he felt assured he could advantageously put in a word for poor Miss Charlotte with the Captain—turn the current into the right channel, and benefit all parties, to his heart's content. Long accustomed to the business of doing favours, interceding for favours; influencing this great man, persuading that; writing to persons in power, promising assistance to those not in power;—this benevolent person now undertook, during his retirement from arduous duties, that most arduous of all undertakings—the management of a love affair—a species of business in which his experience lay some thirty years back; so that the difficulties of the only transaction of the sort, in which he had ever had any personal interest, were effaced from recollection—its pleasures only remembered, its anxieties ‘clean forgotten.’”

Armed with the best intentions, and restless from the excitement of wishing to do something, the old gentleman fidgeted in and out of the house, several mornings, on the look

out, in case Captain Ashbrook or Henry Warner should call. It was his scheme to intercept the former, and, in the course of a turn in the shrubbery, before entering the house, to manage to introduce an encomium upon Miss Fortescue's domestic virtues, her love of flowers, and of children; his hopes of seeing her well married before he died—how well her mother had become the head of her table, &c. &c.

Then, with regard to Henry Warner, his cue was, to see that he had access to the lady of his heart, who was seldom in the state rooms of the Hall, but immured in some dressing-room, study, or school-room wing of the building. It would also be necessary, Mr. Lermont thought, for him to stand about, to give countenance to the young people, to look as if the call were on him,—to smoothe Sir John's anger in case of an interruption.

Accordingly, for a day or two, Mr. Lermont was unusually idle, pottering about with his hands behind him, his head turned back, and his eyes towards the park gate. Poor old gentleman, he could not, for the world, imagine any affair going on well without him. However, for two days, his office of match-maker

was a sinecure. Captain Ashbrook came not, neither did Henry Warner ; and Mr. Lermont began to find an accumulation of other business upon his hands ; for he was a man of a most extensive correspondence. Every day, at breakfast, when the post bag was brought in and unlocked, large packets, franked by different persons, high in office, or by noblemen ; others, post-paid, as if by suitors, were handed over, with Sir John's accustomed speech of—“ Well, sir, as usual, you have as many letters as the secretary of state.” And then the old gentleman was usually all the morning answering these letters, taking copies of what he wrote, enclosing and re-enclosing, and never happy if he could not read his elaborate epistles over to some one or other. Sir John usually got out of the way ; or, if he listened to them, blamed his old friend for taking so much trouble, often for persons of whom he knew little. Mrs. Waldegrave's cold approval and doubts did not suit the warm-hearted, zealous old gentleman ; of Charlotte, and her cold freezing manner, he was afraid : Miss Alice was always busy remodelling, or causing to be remodelled—or, as Lady Lovaine called

it, intriguing with her caps and gowns : Hubert was apt to make too free ; but Rosabel was the person — Rosabel, with her thoughts fixed upon other matters, found it easy to assume the attitude of a listener ; and fancied, perhaps, that she listened, whilst she was only thinking. Rosabel always approved ; he could never go too far in his generous schemes for Rosabel : she was no critic, either as to style or orthography—never questioned the perfect wisdom of what he said—laughed, when she found that a witticism was intended to enliven the otherwise dry disquisition on business ; and was melted, if not into tears, into something resembling them, at her worthy friend's climaxes—his addresses to the feelings—his perorations, which sometimes occurred in the postscripts. She never doubted, either the extent of his influence, or the duration of those friendships which he had formed when he lived in the world, and was useful to the powerful : consequently, she entered into his hopes and wishes in a manner as sanguine as his own ; and she sympathized in his disappointments with an indignation which her old friend never indulged, and perhaps never felt ; for it was as difficult

to him to blame, as it is to many others to praise. Rosabel, therefore, usually sat with Mr. Lermont the greater part of the morning ; for her hurried, imperfect education, was now considered as completed ; and, as she was a tolerable hand at sealing and folding letters, some sort of utility was made the plea for her sitting with Mr. Lermont.

Their sanctum, or, as Sir John called it, their office, consisted of a small sitting room at the extremity of the suite of apartments, and had once been known by name, now exploded, of the breakfast parlour. There Lady Fortescue had given her orders to the housekeeper ; settled, or perhaps unsettled her accounts, in which the items " sundries," or, in other words, " profit and loss," formed a conspicuous feature. After her death, it had degenerated into a sort of work room, so called by courtesy, but actually play room, for the Miss Fortescues : for Sir John had quite abandoned it for any purposes of his own, and seldom entered an apartment where the image of a beloved and still secretly lamented wife seemed peculiarly to prevail : it is in such intimate recesses that the bereaved heart dares not to trust itself. It was now fitted up as a

room especially for Mr. Lermont: Mrs. Waldegrave not choosing to have him in the drawing room; Sir John dreading the interruption of his presence in the library.

Mr. Lermont, however, delighted in the place allotted to him, for many reasons; it reminded him of Lady Fortescue—and *he* could bear the remembrance to be hourly forced upon him—and its dullness and smallness were a safeguard against the too frequent visits of Hubert, Howard, and the younger members of the family, who made free with his pig-tail, tossed his slippers out of the window, scribbled over his paper, and made seals with his wax. Rosabel delighted also in the little dull, dark room, the green room, as it was now called; for the solitary hours which she had spent in it, often no better employed than in watching the swallows build in the corner of the window, even these hours of loneliness had endeared it to her, before another cause of attachment to it had entered within the scope of her girlish comprehension.

The window of the room, shaded by the clematis and honeysuckle, opened on the ground, and upon a path, which, skirting for some little

distance by the side of a rich shrubbery, was soon lost in the thicker woods of the park. This park, however, continued, until you might gain the boundary of Ashbrook, and it happened, by some strange coincidence, that it was a favourite walk both with Captain Ashbrook and with Rosabel. It was pleasant, too, as Mr. Lermont himself observed, to see from his sanctum the blue smoke of Ashbrook House rising behind the trees: it gave such an air of comfort to the scene: "not but that I think," said the old gentleman, fearful that he had not the entire sympathy of Rosabel,—“not but that I think the hill a finer place.”

One busy morning, when Mr. Lermont, immersed in letters which must go by this day's post, his fingers and neckcloth stained with ink, for he was the most untidy writer possible, a pen behind his ear, and a candle which had been burning an hour by his side—in all this business and confusion, two words, with some people synonymous terms—he was surprised by a visit from Captain Ashbrook, who was ushered at once into Mr. Lermont's sitting room, as he enquired for that gentleman in particular. Mr. Lermont had been so taken up with the affairs

of half-a-dozen other persons, that he had almost forgotten, by this time, the necessity there was of settling the business of Ashbrook versus Warner, or Warner versus Ashbrook. The whole concern, however, immediately rushed into his mind, especially whilst glancing at Rosabel, who was, as usual, in his sanctum—he regretted that it was not Charlotte—and, in the interim between taking off his spectacles and putting them into the case, he revolved in his mind how he could fetch up Charlotte, without leaving the two others tête-a-tête: for if, as he still suspected, Captain Ashbrook's inclination leaned towards Rosabel, by leaving them together he was fostering that attachment which would, he felt assured, be disagreeable to Rosabel, but acceptable to Charlotte. Unfortunately, this worthy man, too simple and good to deceive others, had the great defect of character—for I think it is a defect, although it may spring from an amiable disposition—of being extremely credulous; therefore he never doubted but that Mrs. Waldegrave's hints, as to the state of his favourite Rosabel's affections, were perfectly correct.

Under this impression, he fidgeted and fidgeted.

eted, peeped into the hall, rang the bell for his hat and walking stick ; sat down for a minute or two, got up again, and finally disappeared for a time altogether. Meanwhile, Rosabel and Captain Ashbrook consoled themselves for his absence wonderfully well. Both felt that in each other's society they enjoyed a reciprocity of feeling which inspires the most cursory remarks with interest. Both knew, or fancied, that their concerns, their thoughts, their occupations were mutually interesting ; and hence, as, in the company of those we love, is often the case, the conversation had almost an egotistical turn. At length they rose, and strolled out ; Rosabel not without some trepidation—some portion of that fear “which looks behind”—some dread of inquisitive eyes from a certain part of the house where her aunts' room was situated ; but a stronger feeling than even this dread impelled her, and, with her usual recklessness of consequences, away she went.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lermont had obtruded into the drawing-room, where Charlotte, unconscious of all that was passing below, sat at her tambour frame, her delicate cheek shaded by

the fair hair, not a single curl of which had been disturbed by early exercise. The personal charms of Charlotte consisted entirely in the delicacy of her complexion, and in a certain symmetry of form and feature, which did not, however, amount to any elevated style of beauty. Compared to Rosabel, she was like a portrait in water-colour by the side of a rich oil painting. Nor were there any of those fleeting variations, those expressions of mind and of feeling, which give to our admiration of beauty the value of an intellectual tribute, and stamp upon the heart the memory of fascinations not altogether evanescent. These were totally absent in Charlotte; nor were the muscles of her countenance, or the arrangements of her dress, ever disturbed by those eager impulses and hasty movements which are among the chief attributes of youth. Already the cut of her garments, her gait, her voice, began to resemble those of her aunt Mrs. Waldegrave; and a fearful chilliness of manner, a painful narrowness of opinion, to pervade her general characteristics. Mr. Lermont, as he advanced with eagerness into the room, stopped short; his

ardour in her cause almost frozen by her unbending manner, and by the cold and unmeaning glance with which she regarded him.

“Ah! she’s not like the family—she’s far inferior to her sister!” was the thought which checked him as he stopped short at the door—his shoes down at the heels, his black coat, for he had worn black ever since his wife’s death, quite white at the elbows—and remembered his attire, of which he should not have thought, had it been Rosabel to whom he was talking. He had, however, so much love for all his friend’s family, so much innate goodness himself, that a faint smile from Charlotte, if smile it could be called which scarcely broke upon the repose of her features, and the salutation, “Well, Mr. Lermont, we have not seen you here for an age!” revived all his previous schemes in her favour.

“Miss Charlotte, here, come along with me,” he said, with a boding look at Mrs. Waldegrave, who sat at the extremity of a settee, looking, as if to lean back would have been too great a condescension, if indeed she could have leaned back upon an article of furniture which the taste, or rather the indolence of modern days has discarded; a seat which offered the show of repose, without the reality.

“Your good aunt will permit me, I know, to run away with you,” added Mr. Lermont, drawing the young lady’s arm within his, and bustling with her out of the room, as if the fate of nations had depended upon their exit. They reached the sanctum, but no sounds of voices were heard within: Rosabel and Captain Askbrook were gone: and Mr. Henry Warner, who had walked over to pay his respects particularly to Mr. Lermont, was the only occupant of the apartment.

What was to be done? Poor Mr. Lermont, after welcoming his young guest, moved anxiously to the window, and discerned Rosabel and Captain Ashbrook, walking at their usual brisk pace towards a small ascent, crowned with a grove, which at this early season, for it was towards the close of March, presented but few attractions.

“They will be standing there, looking at the view, now,” said the old gentleman to himself. “Miss Charlotte, what say you to a walk?” he added, aloud. “You are not like your sister, Miss Rosa there, who goes out as I see, without either head or neck on; but perhaps you’ll venture in a calash?”

“I have a handkerchief, sir, and Ford can

send for my bonnet," replied Charlotte, coldly, as she rung the bell. "Oh! Captain Ashbrook is with my sister, I see," she continued, with the same unaltered countenance. "Well! I think I will brave the cold, my maid is always so long."

"'This way, then," cried Mr. Lermont, eagerly. "Your sister walks so fast," he added, walking away himself with all the ardour of pursuit; and to do his companions justice, they did their best to keep up with him. Charlotte's colour, for a wonder, came and went, and there was a something like an expression of anxiety in her countenance. All at once, it occurred to Mr. Lermont, that he could meet the inconsiderate pair by a nearer path, and intercept their course; so, after a few hurried words, he set off for that purpose, leaving Miss Fortescue and Mr. Warner tête-a-tête. Neither of these two persons liked each other. Charlotte looked down upon the Warners, as people every way inferior to her, and Henry Warner had seen and heard quite enough of Miss Fortescue, to be certain that she had neither heart nor mind. She suffered, too, in his estimation, by a comparison with Rosabel; of whose mental

and personal charms he was an humble and hopeless admirer. This tête-a-tête, therefore, was but little enlivened by conversation ; and a stranger, meeting the unhappy pair, might have thought they were spell-bound to preserve silence. Charlotte's demeanour was so frigid, her face so statue-like ; and Mr. Henry Warner moved on with a gravity of deportment which would have suited a funeral.

Very different was the condition of the couple whom they were pursuing. At times, Charlotte caught glimpses of them, when the sight was any thing but consoling to her, and her equally disappointed companion ; for Captain Ashbrook and Rosabel moved along as if they had forgotten that any one might be behind them : he, in earnest and animated conversation, evidently quite absorbed in his companion :—stopping now and then, as if to point out a favourite object, or to delay perhaps moments which might seem to fleet. It was not, apparently, that they entered the slight conversation of indifference, and that they enjoyed the thoughtless laugh of youth ; their discourse appeared almost serious : what could it be ?

Charlotte, selfish upon principle, and tena-

cious about what she conceived to be her own rights, began to feel angry with Rosabel for her interposition between herself and him whom all the world had assigned to her. She grew more and more dissatisfied with her present companion—felt herself neglected ; and gave herself no trouble, either to volunteer observations, or scarcely reply to his. He, on the other hand, equally disappointed, and his heart more really interested, offended with the one sister, and tantalized, every now and then, with a distant vision of the other, wished himself any where but where he was ; and a proud, angry, disdainful expression settled upon a countenance usually animated and agreeable.

At last, the pursuers and pursued came in contact. Rosabel and her companion chose, for some reason not obvious, to turn away from the walk ; and, after some mysterious rambles, came unexpectedly upon Charlotte and her despised attendant ; for companion he could not be called. Charlotte, before she saw the truant pair, could hear Captain Ashbrook saying :—

“ Then you agree with me, that a break in the avenue will be an advantage, and no profan-

ation ? It shall be done immediately. I was thinking of inserting painted glass windows in the Hall.—Do you like painted glass ?” But here they were encountered by Miss Fortescue, and Captain Ashbrook had not the benefit of Rosabel’s opinion upon the windows, painted or not, of his Hall.

“ How fast you walk !” said Charlotte, her glance first passing over Captain Ashbrook, and then fixing upon Rosabel, with that half-monitory, half-contemptuous look, which she considered, from Mrs. Waldegrave’s tuition, herself privileged to pursue to such graceless characters as younger brothers and sisters.

“ Not fast, I think,” remarked Henry Warner, “ we have been more than half an hour walking ; you set out sooner, I think, than we did, Captain Ashbrook.”

“ You speak as if you were envious of our speed,” replied Captain Ashbrook, looking at him.—“ But here is Mr. Lermont ; and he appears so agitated, that I fear he has some bad news to communicate.—Well, sir ?”

“ My dear Miss Rosa—my worthy friend, Captain Ashbrook—you will be accountable for a fit of apoplexy, or a sciatica, if you make

me run after you so," cried the good old gentleman, his face radiant with heat.

"Nay, sir," said Rosabel, playfully, "it was you who first ran away from us."

"What a beautiful glow," thought Henry Warner to himself, "the wind has brought into her face; no wonder that Captain Ashbrook has found his walk so agreeable."

"We were saying," resumed Captain Ashbrook, "that if a branch or two of those old elms were lopped off, or even," he added, reluctantly, "a tree were cut down, we might—I mean to say—there might be a favourable glimpse of Ashbrook from this very spot; that gable end, of which we catch the point, now that the trees are leafless, would look well, and would break the, perhaps, too thick foliage." He half turned to Rosabel as he spoke.

"I think it just depends upon opinion," said Mr. Lermont.

"It is quite a matter of taste," said Charlotte.

"I thought you were calling it sacrilege, the other day," remarked Henry Warner, to touch one of those old elms."

"Yes; but I have altered my opinion—I

see things in a different point of view to-day," replied Captain Ashbrook.

"That I have no doubt of," said Mr. Lermont; it depends so much on the company we are in, in what point of view we see things. You are willing to oblige your friends and neighbours with a prospect of your mansion; that is very good, very well thought of. What is Miss Charlotte's opinion on the subject?"

"Oh, I—" answered Charlotte, coldly, "am not a person of taste, and need not be consulted in such matters." Her eye rested, for an instant, contemptuously upon her sister's glowing countenance.

Rosabel, quickly alive to all Charlotte's indications of feeling, answered that glance by saying, in a fond tone—"Oh yes, you are, Charlotte—much more than I am," she was going to say, but she broke off, merely adding, "no one has so much taste as Charlotte; Aunt Waldegrave says so."

Her warmth of manner, and her sister's coldness, formed indeed a striking contrast; and a few minutes of silence prevailed. Captain Ashbrook could not withdraw his eyes

from the last speaker, whilst those of Henry Warner were bent upon the ground. At last the little coterie moved onwards ; Mr. Lermont thinking it prudent to secure Rosabel to himself, whilst Henry Warner walked beside him ; and Charlotte was left, as was her due, according to Mrs. Waldegrave, under the eligible guidance of Captain Ashbrook.

“ It will not do,” thought Mr. Lermont to himself, as he sauntered home, dropping back after young Warner and Rosabel ; “ the Captain hangs in the wind, as the sailors say ; the other affair goes on prosperously—too prosperously, perhaps—poor Rosabel,” thought he, as he raised his head and looked at her—Rosa is happy, now she is with the right man. God bless her, and may God grant that her father be propitious to her wishes. I must try my influence *that* way ;”—and, happy in the notion that his influence could be available any way, Mr. Lermont bustled in after the young people.

## CHAPTER XIX.

“ Some honour I would have,  
Not from good deeds, but good alone.”

COWLEY.

MR. LERMONT's whole energies, for the few days following this incident, were directed to the forwarding of what he conceived to be Rosabel's wishes ; softening Sir John's prejudices, seeking the aid of Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice, and promoting a frequent communication between Rosabel and the family at the Hill. With these designs, he harassed and disappointed the poor girl as much as possible ; took her twice out of the way when Captain Ashbrook was expected to call ; infused into the mind of that individual doubts as to Rosabel's sentiments to himself ; and cherished fallacious hopes in Henry, who had never, hitherto, even ventured to think of Rosa-

bel, but as a prize far above his grasp. His father began to joke him, and Phillis and Amy to rejoice at Rosabel's frequent visits to the Hill; always, it is true, brought thither by Mr. Lermont, sometimes on foot, sometimes in a rumbling old phaeton, which had stood in the coach-house for years, but which was now brought out at Mr. Lermont's petition, as it could hold only two with any convenience, and furnished a pretext for their tête-a-tête drives. Rosabel, fond of the Miss Warners, and glad to escape from home at any rate, and in hopes of encountering Captain Ashbrook, gave unwittingly into the old gentleman's schemes, not having the slightest notion of his actual intentions.

“ I really begin to think, aunt, that Rosa and Mr. Lermont will make a match of it,” said Hubert, as he stood one day looking out of the window. “ Aunt Alice, you will have to wear the willow. Look at them coming down the hill, the old fellow driving, and Rosabel with her hat flying back—what a figure! Ha! who is that overtaking them? Lady Lovaine, in her old coach, I declare; her monkey looking out of the window! My lord inside, I suppose,

attended by pillows and bolsters ; and the old stick of a footman outside."

Mrs. Waldegrave, who had been out of humour all the morning, smoothed her brow at this intelligence, and assumed that meek, placid look with which ill-tempered persons sometimes know how to veil their actual dispositions.

The voice of Lady Lovaine in the hall was very soon audible.

" Well, it is a call—take it for granted. My lord is enveloped in cotton wool to-day—cannot stir out—wind easterly. I never allow either him or Joco to stir out in an easterly wind.—You must all come," she added, as she entered the drawing-room, "to a family party on Wednesday. It is Ashbrook's birth-day ; and, as he is our heir, our son by adoption, we cannot pass over so important an occasion. We will not say what his age is.—Where is Rosabel ? Let us be satisfied with the pleasing certainty that he will live to see me and Lord Lovaine low, low, low.

" Alice, we shall expect you among the young people ; and my favourite, Miss Rosabel, of course ; and her brother, who, if I doubt not, will make many a young heart

ache. A flirt, is he not, betimes ? Mrs. Waldegrave, we reckon upon you and Miss Fortescue. Alas ! what is so miserable as a family party !”

“ We should all feel honoured,” Mrs. Waldegrave began—

“ Well then, do ; and let me take it for granted—”

“ But permit me to say—Hubert, I fear, is engaged on that day : I know nothing of Sir John’s movements : and Rosa, my lady, allow me to observe, is too young to enter into dinner visits : you would not, I am sure, sanction such a thing ; nor could I believe it to be right.”

“ I do—I shall,” replied Lady Lovaine, inflexibly. “ I will not only sanction, but have her.—What ! leave my pretty Rosa at home ! the belle and attraction of the whole party ! No, no : what would Ashbrook say to that ?”

“ Hush, hush,” cried Mrs. Waldegrave, in consternation, and looking round to see if her nieces were there. Rosabel only was present.

“ I can assure you, sister Waldegrave, your generalship will be all thrown away upon Charlotte, in this instance. Rosabel is his attraction ; Rosabel is mine. Not that you ought to

be even thinking of marriage at your age, child," she added, sternly looking round at Rosabel, who stood at a little distance, her consciousness and confusion strongly counter-acted by her curiosity. "It would be far better for you to be at your lessons, or working at your sampler, child, than thinking of such matters,—or listening to two old women's tales."

"Rosabel, withdraw," said Mrs. Waldegrave, in the mildest possible tone, whilst her face was pale with rage.

"Miss Fortescue, I tell you," pursued Lady Lovaine, as she seated herself on the chair nearest to her, "will never attract a man of Captain Ashbrook's sort—a man all soul and sentiment; though I hold such things to be very absurd and inconvenient; but still it is so: and he is well enough for a lord to be. I suppose he will not disgrace his predecessor—Heigho!"

"He's a fine creature! a gentlemanly fellow!" said Mr. Lermont, who came from an inner room, with three or four half-opened letters in his hand. "And what a pleasant, mild, well-bred, clever, sensible young man, is

that Mr. Henry Warner. Miss Rosabel is vastly fond of the sisters, and really seems herself just like one of the family."

"I hope not!" exclaimed Lady Lovaine. "As I have the honour to be connected myself with Sir John Fortescue's family, I am not at all ambitious of that sort of addenda to it. Mrs. Waldegrave, what say you? But, no, no; Miss Rosabel is destined for better things. *He* will do for the fourth or fifth sister. I have laid an embargo upon Rosabel."

"Oh, certainly!" interposed Mrs. Waldegrave, with a laugh so forced that it almost assumed the character of a convulsive twitch; "but the inclinations, my lady, are so much studied in the present day; young ladies must now have their own way in these matters. I fear we cannot contend against custom. Formerly, young persons were not consulted; but now, they consider themselves quite a party concerned."

"And so they are;—yet they have no right to decline an advantageous proposal," replied Lady Lovaine; "nor shall, nor will, Rosabel. And, to 'make assurance doubly sure,' I will have her under my own eye at Medlicote for a

few days. Of course, sister Waldegrave, you will consent to what is so very much for your niece's advantage? Where is the child? Do not trouble yourself: I will take upon myself the whole responsibility with Sir John. Don't hurry yourself, don't hurry yourself, sister Waldegrave! she is in the school-room, I suppose?—where, indeed, she ought to be. This way?—that way? I hope she is not troubling her head, as yet, with matrimonial matters. But, certainly, she must not be allowed to refuse Ashbrook for all the Warners in existence.”

“ But, my lady,” interposed Mr. Lermont, who now stepped forward to Mrs. Waldegrave's assistance, “ in these affairs of the heart, you know—”

“ A heart! what has she to do with a heart? And is not Ashbrook the man to engage any girl's heart?—Handsome,—at least, passably so: he takes after my lord's family; they all have *that*—but I weary myself arguing the matter—And all this while there is Lovel, our parish doctor, waiting to consult me about a poor man's leg. The school will be in the last confusion! Our head teacher is on a pleasure

jaunt to-day. I wonder what poor people have to do with pleasure jaunts, or with hearts!—things both unnecessary. Well, I suppose, like all young ladies, she will be an hour at her toilet before I can take her. ‘In that how admirable, Clarissa!’ I cannot endure novels!—cannot read them—they make me sick! But *Clarissa is a pattern.*”

“Quite a pattern,” echoed Mrs. Waldegrave.

“Quite so,” said Aunt Alice.

“She,” pursued Lady Lovaine, without noticing either of these assents, “could always dress in half an hour, and was seemly and gentlewomanlike in that time; whilst her sister, Arabella——Bless me! it is one o’clock—this woman’s leg—never could make herself fit to be seen—a shower coming on, I think—in double the time. Hah! Sir John, how do you do? I was coming in search of you, to request you to let me run away with your second daughter, who takes my fancy vastly.”

“Your ladyship does her much honour,” answered Sir John, gravely; “and I feel the kindness the more, that it is extended to Rosabel, who has few opportunities of cultivating the good-will of her friends; but——”

“ Oh, I see you consent ; and, as Mrs. Waldegrave has not, cannot, have any objection, it is a settled thing. Oh, as to her wardrobe, you know Medlicote is quite a seclusion, an absolute Noah’s ark : do not trouble yourself ; we are not particular : and if the child should be a little old-fashioned, she will suit the place better. I abominate—don’t you ?—these sleeves that are the mode ! so long ; even below the elbow. Women are so ashamed of their arms now-a-days ; there will not be an arm fit to be seen in the next century. I am glad Rosabel still keeps to the proper, discreet, becoming short sleeve\*.”

“ I quite agree with your ladyship,” replied Mrs. Waldegrave ; “ nothing is so becoming as a mitten ; nothing so unladylike as a long sleeve.”

“ Miss Goodyer,” interposed Aunt Alice, eager to be heard, “ and all the Goodyers, are famous for their arms ; and, I have heard say, have their white kid mittens sown to their sleeves, every day a fresh pair, and never taken off.”

“ The important question of sleeve versus mitten is therefore,” said Lady Lovaine, “ de-

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\* The sleeve was afterwards abridged, according to the fashion adopted by the famous Mrs. Abingdon.

cided ; it is not who shall throw down, but who shall take up, the glove. By your leave, my carriage—and—Rosabella. Depend upon my lecturing her bravely, Mrs. Waldegrave, my instilling her with proper notions of what is due to herself, and to you.”—And, without heeding the suppressed ill-humour and despair of her sister-in-law, or the imitative perturbations of Aunt Alice, Lady Lovaine marched onwards towards the part of the house usually occupied by the young ladies, gave orders for Rosabel’s immediate departure with her,—overturned the serenity of the whole household ;—hurried the lady’s maid, affronted the butler, set two or three of the younger ones crying, and nearly ran over the governess. At last, Rosabel, in an agitation of surprise, which permitted her no time to bewail the unprepared state of her toilet, was bundled in after Lady Lovaine ; an imperial, containing her clothes, being, at the same time, hoisted upon the summit of the vehicle.

All seemed like a dream ; and Rosabel, like an emancipated slave, who revels in the vision of freedom, was fearful of awakening from her delusion. But she soon found,

that whatever might be her enjoyments at Medlicote, freedom was not amongst them. It was merely a change of tyrants that she had undergone ; despotism still prevailed, and, perhaps, the rein was even tighter than at home. It was well that she had learned to be submissive, and that submission was, in many cases, agreeable to herself.

The first evening was one of repose, almost of gloom. Lady Lovaine was satisfied with having carried her point ; and she rested tranquilly on her oars, awaiting the next day. His lordship was bilious and fretful ; and his fretfulness was that of a feeble, yet wayward child, whose power consists solely in the ability to be disagreeable. Accustomed to act as a kind of keeper to her consort, Lady Lovaine, whenever she gave way in the least, had to rue her concessions ; for his lordship's irritability was apt to increase to a kind of petty frenzy, which was only restrained, in the presence of Rosabel, by his extreme good breeding, that strong curb of habit in the old school. Rosabel absolutely pitied Lady Lovaine the first evening, and rejoiced when the peevish and suffering invalid was fairly quieted into his easy chair by

a dose of camphor and opium in the evening. There he sank down, having, after many apologies, drawn on his velvet night-cap, looking, on a large scale, sagacity of expression not included, like one of those waxen effigies of Voltaire in his last illness, which present the French philosopher in no very enviable condition.

“It is all very well,” whispered Lady Lovaine to Rosabel, as his lordship, after trying in vain to keep his eyes open, closed them finally—“it is all very well when people are worn out by actual disease, or vexed into a consumption by real miseries; but when, as in my lord’s case, the disease is half imaginary, and the miseries wholly so—but it is a family tendency; even Ashbrook, with all his fine qualities, has some traits of his uncle—would you believe it?”

“No, indeed, I could not,” said Rosabel, very earnestly; “I mean, at least, I do not see any resemblance.” She spoke with an emphasis, with a blush, which quite satisfied Lady Lovaine of her preference, whilst, with that pride of family opinion which was the standard ingredient of her character, she answered, almost haughtily—

“It will be well for Captain Ashbrook, if he

be ever so popular as my lord has been. Indeed, I doubt it; my lord's manners were always deemed perfection; no one so popular, I can assure you."

Rosabel was not disposed to controvert that point; and the conversation passed until bed-room candles were brought to the drawing-room door by Lady Lovaine's maid; and the vast precincts of Medlicote were soon hushed in repose.

At a distance from Mr. Lermont, Captain Ashbrook's love-suit went on prosperously, and Lady Lovaine, amidst the self-gratulations of spasms cured, gout averted, chilblains prevented, and bile fairly driven out of the field, began to add that of having rooted out Rosabel's foolish predilections, and safely established her nephew's favour in their place. With the indiscretion of feminine generalship, she could not, however, avoid hinting to Captain Ashbrook that she had thought it right to bring Rosabel away from home, in order to keep her from injurious society, or from forming injurious connections. The colour mounted into Captain Ashbrook's face; but he dismissed the feelings which arose, with the reflection that the sug-

gestion was one of Lady Lovaine's chimeras.—Indeed, he had every cause to hope, at least, that Rosabel's early prepossessions were in his own favour.

He lost no time, at any rate, in preferring his suit; and Lady Lovaine, who had, during all her married life, hated a young man loitering about the house, in here, out there, soon began to be weary of courtship. It is no slight misery to feel oneself *un de trop*.—Pardon, gracious reader, this gallicism; for it demands pardon, for there is no offence, in my opinion, so atrocious as that of the introduction of foreign phrases into our honest English narratives. Lady Lovaine, however, experienced to the full the conviction that her company was any thing but indispensable to Rosabel and Captain Ashbrook. When she staid two hours in the village, worrying the poor, she found, on her return, not that they were surprised at her absence, but that she had been gone so long as she stated. Captain Ashbrook, who had long shown her the affection, and more than the assiduity, of a son, now seemed to forget her existence. When Rosabel was present, he was all grace, animation, and enjoyment :—alone with Lady

Lovaine, she could not absorb his attention, even at the alarm of a typhus fever in the village, or upon the news of the schoolmaster's having given notice to quit. She could not even now put him out of humour, except when she talked of his regiment, or of the termination of his leave of absence.

“Thank God!” said her ladyship to herself, “we can have but one heir! and it is a great charge to have the marrying of him properly!” The child is well enough, but shows her partiality for Ashbrook much too plainly; and, with all his expectations, he will have, after all, what he has always wished—a love-match entirely; it is hardly a compliment to the family, the low account which this giddy young thing makes of titles and estates; not that she ought to begin to value Medlicote yet awhile—no—no.”

My lord was less discerning; he saw no particular meaning in Rosabel's staying at Medlicote, nor in Captain Ashbrook's spending the greater part of every day there. He only thought his nephew came over to enquire after his arm.

“What! Ashbrook again? My good sir, this

is doing too much. It would be unconscionable in me to require it. Wouldn't it, Lady Lovaine? You are really prodigiously attentive. Isn't he, Miss Rosabella?"

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed Lady Lovaine, as she saw Rosabel depart, when the week was completed. "I have done my duty—shewn the child what a gentleman is; kept her from low connections—secured to Ashbrook one to his mind. Just the sort of fatiguing job as with the clerk's daughter, last year; and now they may settle the rest of their affairs for themselves. I can have nothing more to do with them; especially whilst the school is in such confusion."

It was with mingled gloom and elation, that Rosabel returned to the home of her fathers. She well knew with what sentiments her female relations there would receive her. She dreaded Charlotte's coldness far more than the hard unkindness of Mrs. Waldegrave: in the latter case it was her pride, not her affection, that was wounded. She had no expectation of sympathy from any one. Hubert was too heedless, her father too stern, the rest of the family too young. She doubted not but that reprehension to a certain extent would be her fate; but all

this she could now well sustain, for she was supported by the certainty that to one heart she was exclusively dear, nor could she but look forward to a happier home, a haven of peace, where she could forget the injustice and slights which had rendered her girlhood a season of unhappiness and mortification. Armed with this support, Rosabel prepared to encounter, with temper and magnanimity, any trials of patience which might await her. She felt that she was a changed being. Age had brought its usual antidote of reason to rebellious feelings and stormy passions; and this early, very early, attachment had taught her to value herself, and had excited her ambition to become a superior being. At present, religion had little or no influence in directing her motives, and in quelling her resentment: that was to be the solace of her yet more adverse days; the monitor and comforter whom we delay to summon to our aid, until sickness or sorrow teaches the wounded spirit that for it there can be no other solace, no other support.

When Rosabel reached home, she found, however, that her absence had been employed by Mrs. Waldegrave in making arrangements

for her yet longer absence from Hales Hall. That something had passed, was evident, from the fallacious calm which sat upon the brow of her aunt, and the smile that graced, or embittered, as it might either way be thought, these words:

“Rosabel, my dear, you have so often begged and prayed to go to your Aunt Evelyn’s for awhile, that your father is persuaded to let you, dear. Good Mrs. Evelyn is overjoyed, and will be ready for you early next week.”

It may be readily conceived with what sensations this fiat was hailed.

## CHAPTER XX.

“If sometimes upon me your thoughts should stray,  
I shall have leisure memory’s debt to pay.”

GOETHE.

“MY father consents—my aunt expects me—even Mr. Lermont has made up his mind to it. Phillis, dear Phillis! Amy, dear Amy! do write to me, and tell me all the news; I shall hear nothing except from you. Don’t fill half a side with apologies, Amy!—nor Phillis, do you criticise my letters!—but tell me all, every thing you hear, about the Hill, about home, about Ashbrook, about Medlicote.”

Such were Rosabel’s words, as she sat with her friends, the Warners, in the farewell visit which she made to the Hill. She longed to unburthen her heart to some one; to establish a faithful correspondence; to say why she felt melancholy at the prospect of her approaching

departure. Her partial friends guessed, as they thought, the cause of her sufferings, and Amy's sympathy dissolved itself in tears. Phillis burned to say, "dear Rosabel, we see your attachment to Henry; we understand all you feel:" but a sense of honour, of propriety restrained her. She even considered it imprudent for the young lovers, as she deemed them, to have an opportunity of taking leave of each other, in the present excited state of their feelings. Rosabel was to walk home: Mr. Lermont, after bringing her over in the phaeton, had left her, in hopes that an impending shower of rain would oblige her to stay all night. He had only been reconciled to Rosabel's departure, by the assurance that Sir John's mind would be more readily brought round to her wishes during her absence. His own private business; a visit to the under secretary of state with a petition from a widow in the Highlands;—interest to make with the East Indian Directors, in favour of a needy friend with a large family;—a commission to be procured, sans purchase, for Hubert; and half-a-dozen minor suits in hand for decayed farmers and poor villagers; made the good man think his visit to the metropolis indispensable.

How could he, also, endure the quiet of Hales Hall without Rosabel? She was the light of his days—her bounding step, her clear, soft voice gladdened his heart, whenever she approached his sanctum. He loved Hubert too; but Hubert vexed and plagued him. He esteemed Sir John, but had too many foibles to excuse in his eyes, too many derelictions from prudence to palliate to his watchful and sincere friend, to feel at ease in his presence; therefore he felt no great reluctance to depart. But to return to Rosabel.

She sat long and mournfully with her young friends, whilst a trusty female servant, aided by John, the under gardener, with umbrellas, awaited her pleasure to escort her on her return home. Phillis, dreading the consequences of a tête-a-tête with Henry, looked forth every now and then, and drew in her head, saying: “Rosa dear, if you are to go, what do you think of that cloud? I should be delighted to have you a little longer; but if it should rain—what do you say to it?”

“Phillis is always prudent,” said Amy; “she always judges right.”

“I shall envy Charlotte going to Hotham races

next week," said Rosabel, rising slowly, and tying her bonnet. "You will all be there—your brother too, I suppose ; and Lady Lovaine is patroness, Captain Ashbrook steward—I never saw any races."

"It is really quite a shame," said Amy, that you should be sent off, this way, from every gaiety. Dear Rosabel, we will write you every particular."

"Be sure," said Rosabel, tearfully, "that you mention how Charlotte looks, and who are her partners ; say how your new dresses fit, and if—if—"

"Yes ; we will tell you every thing," said Phillis ; "you shall hear all about all of us—Henry, and Papa, and all—but, mind you burn our letters."

"I don't wish to be troublesome," added Rosabel, looking down, "but could you write the very day after the race-ball ; and, if any body should ask about me, or miss me, do say. Amy, if you think of it, tell Captain Ashbrook where I am gone to, and that I mean to go and see Ellerslie, an old hereditary property of his in Derbyshire, just close—how curious!—to Aunt Evelyn's. I do not sup-

pose he ever visits it: but he has often talked to me about it."

"He is an excellent man," said Phillis, "and would make a capital match for Charlotte: he would be a great deal too old for you, Rosa; and it is very fortunate that he has no inclination to think otherwise."

"I wish I could agree to that," thought Rosabel, as she moved reluctantly, at last, on her way homewards. Sweet and bitter thoughts occupied her reveries; but her reflections were not wholly of a selfish character. She had her fears for the happiness of others. She saw that Hubert was engrossed by a boyish and impetuous passion for Amy Warner, and that Amy was but too deeply interested in him. Much as she esteemed her friends, that regard did not equalize their station to her own, in her eyes: she had been brought up to hold the purity of the family connection inviolate; and she well knew that Sir John would spurn an intermarriage with the Warner family, as an invasion of his hereditary consequence and rights. She walked, therefore, musingly onwards, her attendants following her at some distance behind, so that her melancholy thoughts

had full play and scope. Thus she passed on, until a turn in the path brought to her view an object which arrested her attention. It was Ashbrook ; which, in other directions was usually shrouded by trees, but which, from this point, looked imposing, although the principal features of the house were those of a respectable antiquity, rather than of grandeur. It was now undergoing improvements and repairs ; not a chimney, indeed, was to be levelled, nor the slightest infringement upon style and character to be permitted. One corner of the house claimed kindred with the days of the Plantagenets ; and to this cherished, original portion, sundry additions had been, at various epochs, made, with as much correspondence to the ancient part as possible. New rooms were now in progress ; a music room, a larger library, and new bed rooms : and Rosabel, as she stretched an eager gaze, saw, with complicated feelings, the workmen at their labours. The sun-beams danced in a small piece of water contiguous to the house ; the first buddings of delightful spring mantled near the grey stones of the house : Rosabel looked long and earnestly, and the sight seemed to refresh her—to

fill her mind with the image of one who was the idol of her young and enthusiastic fancy—to breathe peace and hope into her mind.

She reached home, therefore, in better spirits than she had left it ; but she was met by the trying intelligence that a change had taken place in the arrangement for her departure. Two of the carriage horses were ill ; the other two, which were to take her and her attendant the first two stages, would be wanted for the Hotham races ; they must be rested in time, that was indispensable ; and, consequently, must set out sooner. And, as Mrs. Evelyn was always prepared for the reception of any of her nieces or nephews, it would be of no consequence letting her know.

“ Rosabel would be at home there,” Mrs. Waldegrave said, with a smile ; which, like the east wind on a sunny day, cuts one through and through with a semblance of kindness. Rosabel’s convenience must therefore bend to the general convenience. Her wardrobe was prepared—little or nothing would do for Southwell—it was quite a place to wear out one’s old dress—Mr. and Mrs. Evelyn were not visiting people.

Rosabel could brook this no longer ; her native high spirit had been suppressed by circumstances, but it had merely lain dormant. The colour deepened on her cheek, and her eye flashed with anger, as she told her Aunt that she would not go, at least for some days, unless she knew that it was Sir John's express commands that she should do so.

“ What, not to her Aunt Evelyn's ?—to the aunt whom she preferred to every one else ?—there was no pleasing some people. Once awhile she was ready enough to go—what ailed her with Aunt Evelyn now ?”

Rosabel would not say ; no one had a right to penetrate into her thoughts, except her father. She met with sympathy from no one—her eye glanced in anger upon Charlotte, who sat, apparently unconcerned in the contest, apart from the disputants. The angry glance was returned with a cold, unmeaning, reprov- ing gaze, which seemed to say—“ Why do you appeal to me ?—it is no affair of mine.”

Rosabel felt her heart throb with anguish, her wrath subside into the bitter pang of wounded affection. “ Charlotte !” she cried, “ from my aunts I expect no sympathy—I wish

for none ; it is you—you, who grieve me!—Charlotte—the happy days of our childhood!” she continued, her voice broken by sobs,—“ those happy days, when we loved each other, are all at an end, Charlotte, and I have no friend now—at least, here !”

Charlotte coloured, and looked down ; but, determined not to commit herself, she checked the transitory risings of natural affection, and said, calmly—

“ I don’t see why you should blame me, Rosabel ; I have nothing to do with your plans. I do not think I have acted improperly in any way ; have I, Aunt Waldegrave ? have I, Aunt Alice ?”

“ Assuredly not,” cried Mrs. Waldegrave ; “ nor are we all to be controuled by Miss Rosabel. Some persons are easily set up by imaginary attentions, and—”

“ It is a pity for young people to deceive themselves,” interposed Aunt Alice ; “ I am positive Captain Ashbrook means nothing towards Rosa, at any rate ; and that had Charlotte had the same opportunity at Medlicote—”

“ How calmly the gentleman took the news this morning,” pursued Mrs. Waldegrave, “ of

Miss Rosa's approaching departure ; and how evidently his thoughts were fixed upon another person."

"He was told too," added Aunt Alice, addressing Rosabel, "that you were going away to-morrow—yet not a word."

"Was he then here?" thought Rosabel: "and shall I not see him again?" Yet pride, and a determination not to afford others a triumph over her, made her quell the bitter disappointment which this intelligence occasioned her. She stood erect, and reined in, from no very proper motives to be sure, her ever acute, sometimes misguided feelings.

"You may go to Southwell," resumed Mrs. Waldegrave, with the calmness of determined spite—"you may go to Southwell, happy, if you can be happy, that you have rivalled, or attempted to rival, your sister: a mere attempt, indeed ; like most evil undertakings, it has not succeeded, although it has made her, poor thing, very miserable."

Charlotte, who, like most selfish people, wept readily, when her own misfortunes were touched upon, laid aside her tambour frame,

and began, in her own measured way, to shed tears.

“It is so hard upon the eldest,” said Aunt Alice—

“Sister, I have done,” exclaimed Mrs. Walgrave. “However Miss Rosabel may act, it can be of no consequence eventually to her sister. In short, I am wearied with the subject. Rosabel, I recommend you—you are not to be ordered, I see—I recommend you to withdraw : your presence distresses Charlotte.”

But her words, though tempered by an air of dignified lenity, fell unheeded. Rosabel, pained, as she had been, for herself, now experienced a feeling far more poignant to her generous nature than all the varied emotions which she had suffered during this conversation. She looked at Charlotte—she saw the unwonted tears : to her imagination, her sister really appeared ill, and dejected. She still fondly loved Charlotte ; the thousand associations of infancy and childhood—the mysterious bond of nature—had still their influence over a heart affectionate and sensitive. Self reproach added its sting : she was utterly subdued, penitent, and

miserable. She felt that she would, at this moment, have relinquished every thing, even Captain Ashbrook's affection, if Charlotte could be restored to her as she had once known her, and if her own warm feelings could have scope and vent in their natural channel.

Unrestrained by the chilling presence of her aunts, and eager for forgiveness and reconciliation, she approached Charlotte, and, stooping near her work table, looked earnestly in her sister's face.

“Charlotte,” she said, “is it true that I have distressed you?—that I have interfered with your hopes of happiness? If so, I shall be thankful to leave home, not only for a time, but for ever. I did not know, I did not think, that you were particularly interested in Captain Ashbrook; for I suppose it is that which my aunt means. Only tell me what I am to do—only be the same kind Charlotte to me as ever—only—” But her voice was interrupted by tears, and the rest of the sentence was inaudible.

She waited for some moments for a reply, and, again raising her head, looked earnestly at her sister—

“Charlotte, say that you love me—say that you forgive me.”

“I really do not know what you mean, Rosa.—I cannot guess what all this scene is about. You are very kind and very condescending, to give up Captain Ashbrook in my favour, before he has ever thought of you, most likely ; but I really don’t care at all about the matter.”

“Well, then, Charlotte—let us be as we once were, as we should ever be,” replied Rosabel, imploringly.

“I appeal to my aunts,” answered the prudent Charlotte, “whether I have ever behaved improperly to any one of my sisters. I really do not know what Rosa has to complain of; do you, Aunt Waldegrave? do you, Aunt Alice?”

A torrent of encomiums and assents followed, with “no, my dear; you are most exemplary; such a pattern to your sister!—Complain of, indeed! the complaints were all on the other side.”

“Then I shall say no more,” cried Rosabel, reddening with indignation. “Charlotte, I might have expected this from you; but I know to what, and to whom, I may attribute

this alienation—this heart-breaking unkindness—this cruel indifference.” And, wrought up to the last pitch of irritation, she impetuously broke from the apartment, and soon obtained the repose of her own chamber.

Repose of mind was, however, at any rate, denied to Rosabel; and, like many other persons, she could not allow her body to be quiet when her spirit was restless. Action was indispensable, and, wearied as she was with her long walk in the morning, she longed to catch another parting view of Ashbrook before the day closed in.

The afternoon was windy, though clear from hitherto threatening rain, and the tall tops of the elm trees bowed, and slight branches were even torn from the parent stem, as Rosabel, not without fear of observation, passed fleetly down an avenue which extended on the side of the park nearest to Ashbrook. Bitter were the thoughts which pressed upon her mind. To injustice and coldness she had been for several years inured. Her Aunts, like many ladies who are accustomed to have their own way, were warm partizans, and bitter enemies; for it is the error of our sex to make every thing

a party matter ; to suppose that, in espousing the interests of one individual, we are justified in running down the merits of another. Rosabel had irremediably offended her aunts on many occasions ; she had wounded their pride, and even defied their power. From them she expected no mercy ; but Charlotte—ah ! how bitter was the sting which the recollection of Charlotte's conduct imparted !

Partly in sorrow, and partly in anger, she now reflected, however, that her sister had thrown away all claim to her generosity and forbearance as far as Captain Ashbrook was concerned, and that she was henceforward free to love him. I should very much depart from the truth of my narrative, did I not confess that Rosabel even felt her footsteps quickened towards Ashbrook, and her resolution to follow her inclinations stimulated, when she thought of the manner in which her sister had cast her from her, and remembered how contemptuously she had rejected all concessions on her own part. Poor Rosabel ! Retribution, which visits all wanderers from the fold of Christian charity, came also to her ill-regulated, though perhaps excusable emotions. Time, and the world, bring their

own chastening along with them. Happy are those who receive such correctives into the good seed of a mind not utterly depraved by selfishness, or hardened by frequent delinquencies.

Rosabel at length reached a little break in the woods, whence she could see a window or two,—and part of a chimney-top of Ashbrook House ; and on this precious sight her eyes rested with the fond imaginative gaze of seventeen. A very narrow lane separated the two estates ; there was only a gap in the hedge to get through, on the one side, and a ditch to jump over ; and, on the other, a five-barred gate to mount, and then any one might pass into a field, from which Rosabel had been told, by Hubert, there was to be discerned the lawn before the house, and perhaps Captain Ashbrook walking, possibly his dog, at any rate, and a peacock or two. What temptations to the love-sick and enthusiastic ! And Rosabel, with her usual disregard of consequences and appearances, scrambled through the hedge, surmounted the ditch, and was deliberating about scaling the gate, when a well-known voice, near her, made her stop in tremor. It was Captain Ashbrook, as happy and

confused as herself; or, perhaps, if possible, more so.

I must suppose my readers to be deficient in imagination, and certainly never to have been in love, if they could require to be told that, as Rosabel retraced her steps homeward, her arm resting upon that of Captain Ashbrook, disclosures on both sides took place; which would have electrified Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice, had they not been happily unconscious of such proceedings. Captain Ashbrook was all anxiety to arrest Rosabel's journey to Southwell, by a direct proposal to her father; but to this there were some obstacles, for pressing military business, at this time, called him to London, and he knew that Rosabel would be happier with Mrs. Evelyn than at home, in her present state of feeling.

Rosabel, on the other hand, happy as she felt she ought to be, secretly reproached herself with the dread of inflicting suffering upon Charlotte; and desired, although she could not allege the reason, that no mention should be made of their now acknowledged attachment until after her return from Southwell; for she felt her heart more softened to her sister by

her own present happiness, than it would have been by a hundred lectures, or by many moments of solitary reflection. Correspondence, without which our degenerate modern lovers could not exist a week, was proposed by Captain Ashbrook, but instantly rejected ; for, in those days, the parental consent was held in reverence ; and, before that had been formally obtained, such a communication would have been deemed dishonourable on the one side, and undutiful on the other. An absence of a few weeks would be nothing ; and Rosabel's return would be hailed by an immediate proposal on Captain Ashbrook's part, made in all due form, and to be followed by rent-rolls and settlements ; about which one party cared as little, and the other knew as little, as any two persons breathing.

Both Rosabel and Captain Ashbrook were, in the common acceptation of the word, extremely happy ;—but, are people happy immediately after entering into a decided engagement to be married ? I deem the actual nature of the feeling to be very questionable ; like taking the shower-bath—you will, and you will not ; your whole intellectual and corporeal

system suffers a shock—it is some time before you can recover, what is so much for your benefit ; and the glow of delight which ensues, is preceded by a shivering fit.

Rosabel perhaps felt, on this occasion, the most intensely ; neither had she the prudence nor the art to conceal, if she had wished to do so, what passed in her mind. To her, the novelty of being beloved, was the more exhilarating from the contrast with the depressing effects of unjust partiality and neglect at home ; yet such poignant concern for her sister was mingled with what she considered her own selfish felicity, that when Captain Ashbrook, with the ardour of a man for the first time really in love, entreated her at least to allow him to consider their engagement as final, in all save the consent of Sir John, she almost shrunk back, as if she had taken a step of which she already repented. Captain Ashbrook, like all persons whose attachment is worth securing, was confiding, but not presuming, and was even diffident and apprehensive where his affections were really touched. He had been hitherto held back from an explicit avowal of his interest in Rosabel, by the dread of her being

induced, from her unhappiness at home, or commanded by parental authority, to accept him as a lover before her evident partiality for his society had been matured into a decided preference, and, consequently, into a regard which would not only endure through the first gay and unchequered months of a propitious marriage, but would be found stable in the vicissitudes of life ; and stable, not merely from duty, but from strong attachment. All this he considered the more indispensable, because he was ten years Rosabel's senior ; and he had felt the more apprehensive from the vivacity and impetuosity of her character, and from her ignorance of the world. He had feared that she could scarcely know her own mind ; that she would be taught, perhaps commanded, to think that she loved him, by those who were interested in promoting her marriage.

Influenced by these fears, notwithstanding Rosabel's recently avowed preference, Captain Ashbrook, as he fancied that he saw her resolution waver, became anxious and thoughtful, and intensely apprehensive about the real state of her heart. Before his avowal of his own feelings, he could, with some difficulty, it is

true, have withdrawn from any further pursuit of his wishes, had he been certain that they were disagreeable to Rosabel: but all true attachments increase upon confession, and he felt that now his whole happiness was bound up in the result of this one day's conversation. Rosabel's reluctance to have his offer made known at present, her dread of considering the engagement final, her evident desire to find some means of retreating, if necessary, filled his mind with perplexity, and inspired that most cruel of all uncertainties, the doubt of having a true attachment returned: nor was this feeling dispelled when they parted,—although that parting was, on Rosabel's side, reluctant; and although it was mutually understood, that it was a parting preliminary only to a meeting, when every difficulty would be smoothed, and their union be made indissoluble.

## CHAPTER XXI.

“ *Gon.* I have inly wept,  
 Or should have spoke ere this.  
*Alon.* Let grief and sorrow still embrace his heart  
 That doth not wish you joy.”—TEMPEST.

THE next day was one of departures ; Mr. Lermont had fixed upon it for his setting out, and Hubert was to accompany him to the metropolis. Breakfast was ordered at an early hour ; and Sir John, who had latterly been from home, made a point of joining his family this morning.

“ Ah ! my good sir,” cried Mr. Lermont, holding up the newspaper in his hand, “ I have the start of you this morning ; but it is for the last time.”

“—And we shall have those odious politics no more,” said Charlotte, as she seated herself.

“ You ladies think of nothing but caps and bonnets,” cried Hubert ; “ and that is the reason that you don’t like politics.”

“Do young men never think of their waist-coats, or their regimentals, Hubert?” enquired Mr. Lermont.

“—And that is to please the ladies, after all,” observed Charlotte.

“Ladies? Ladies think the world is made for them!” answered Hubert: “for my part, if ever I have a house of my own, the gentlemen shall be helped first, and take precedence in every thing; they shall have the best places. It is a horrid bore coming after half-a-dozen sisters in every thing.”

“Well! Hubert,” said Sir John, “you will not have that trial of your patience long: you will see little enough of your sisters, or of female society in general for these four or five years, I hope.”

“No! sir. I hope Mr. Lermont intends putting up at good quarters in London—at the Chapter Coffee-house, I suppose.—None of your Bouverie Streets, or Craven Streets, for me.—I intend planting myself down in the Haymarket or Bond Street.”

“Indeed! Hubert, I disapprove of your arrangements in that respect: your brother Phil-

lip would have done better to have avoided those fashionable haunts : I do not wish you to walk in his steps ; they will neither suit your expectations, nor my ——” means, Sir John would have added, but the word seemed to overcome him, and he walked to the window.

Hubert received this rebuke in silence, redoubled his attack upon the creature comforts around him, and glanced askance to glean some comfort from Rosabel’s eyes. He looked at her with surprise ; for her head was bent down, as if with shame or grief, and she returned no responsive glance. Sir John returned to the table : “ You will have miserable weather, Mr. Lermont—and, let me see,—Rosabel is to set off to day.—This weather will never do. Rosa, my dear, I hope you will not be very much disappointed, if I say, wait till to-morrow—”

“—Both on your own account, Rosa, and on that of the horses,” said Hubert.

Rosabel tried to look up and smile, but immediately afterwards bent her head forwards, and continued silent.

“—Yet I should be sorry to disappoint you

too, Rosa ; knowing, from your Aunts, that you are so anxious to go."

"The glasses are rising, Sir John," said Mrs. Waldegrave, "and James tells me that this pair of horses is remarkably strong."

"Ah ! the horses—that is the great matter," said Hubert—"Rosa is sure to take no harm."

"If it had been Charlotte," observed weak Aunt Alice, "I should say nothing ; because, brother, as you know, Charlotte has never enjoyed but a very poor state of health ; but Rosabel is exceedingly hearty, brother ;—so—"

"Oh ! she never catches cold," said Hubert : "I would back one Rosabel against a corps of Charlottes."

"I do not require your advice, Hubert," said Sir John, gravely ; "I will rather leave it to Rosa herself to decide.—She shall follow, in this instance, her own inclination ; I will consult her judgment in preference to yours.—With all her imperfections on her head," he added, smiling, "I do not wish to lose her. Nay, Rosa—there is no occasion for those tears—I am not compelling you, my dear, either to go or stay—you give way too much of late to a

morbid sensibility ; let me rather recommend to you the example of your sister, who preserves an equilibrium in her deportment which is highly to be praised."

"Charlotte, sir, is greatly my superior, and I know it," replied Rosabel, with deep humility of manner. "If Charlotte wishes me to stay, I will stay ; but if Charlotte wishes me to go—" and her tears fell faster.

"Well," said Hubert, "I always make off when I see a parcel of women crying. Aunt Waldegrave, you're the best, for you have always dry eyes. Come, sir, we shall meet with some of the Finchley heroes, if we are benighted. Good-bye, Aunt Waldegrave ; good-bye, Aunt Alice ; good-bye, Charlotte, Mrs. Ashbrook that shall be ; good-bye, Rosa—I hope some Derbyshire parson may suit you—now don't be writing to me any of your crossed and double-crossed letters, confounded nonsense—I will send you a dispatch next week, if I happen to think of it. Well, sir?"

Mr. Lermont was, however, resolved to know the fate of Rosabel before his departure. "Sir John," thought he, "is leaning towards

her remaining at home, and she and my friend Henry will be happy yet.—I will see Miss Rosabel to her chariot first—if she is to go;—what says Miss Fortescue?”

“ Oh!” replied Charlotte, “ it would be most unbecoming in me to decide, when my aunts are present—would it not, Aunt Waldegrave?”

“ I will go, if you please, sir,” said Rosabel, in a tone of deep depression; and she advanced timidly towards her father. Sir John looked kindly at her, and saw that some unusual causes of humiliation and distress were working in the mind of his dejected Rosabel: she was, in fact, sustaining the heavy burden of a wounded spirit, of a mind ill at ease with itself. Naturally averse to concealments, she yet, at this very moment, stood before her father, conscious of concealment from him upon a subject which in those days (ours are times of independance) always rested upon a parental fiat, and upon which no blessing, as she thought, could fall without her father’s approbation. She felt, unjustly indeed, criminal to her sister, towards whom her heart still turned with true, but unrequited, affection. A kind word, or glance, from Charlotte would

have immediately elicited a full confession from Rosabel; but Charlotte had a soul of marble, a heart utterly ossified by selfishness. Rosabel, therefore, prepared to depart. Her attendants were ready, the imperials were packed, through the watchful care of Mrs. Waldegrave, and Mr. Lermont stood at the breakfast parlour door, ready to hand her first to her carriage. Yet Rosabel lingered, in hopes of some kind parting word from Charlotte, and longing to throw herself into her father's arms, and weep out all her troubles there. Charlotte merely coldly kissed her, saying—"Make my duty to my aunt and uncle, if you please." And Sir John rather repressed than encouraged the fond, caressing manner which was natural to Rosabel, and which not all the forms of parental superiority could banish from her artless manners; so in a few minutes she was seated, finally seated, in the chariot; Hubert jumping into his chaise at the same moment, and Mr. Lermont standing on the steps, his grey hair blowing about, and something very like tears apparent in his eyes.

Rosabel sank back in the carriage. The

parting was over. She left her home unmourned, and probably unmissed. No fond regrets, nor tender lingering farewells had made her feel that she was leaving a home of affection, that her absence would impart a moment's gloom to any one, or her return add much to the domestic happiness. Her mother—how would she have felt at this first separation from her daughter? But the thought was too poignant, and poor Rosabel abandoned herself to the most depressing of all impressions, that of being unprized and uncared for by those upon whose opinions and affections we have early been accustomed to place account. “I have no friend but one,” thought she, as she looked round once more and took a last look of Ashbrook. The conviction revived her, and a variety of hopes and feelings followed in its train; many of them more natural than commendable. She began to plume herself upon her expectations. Her father would begin to prize her, when he saw her the chosen companion of a man of acquirement and refinement like Captain Ashbrook: her aunts would find that they had entertained too light an opinion

of her merits. Charlotte would perhaps learn to be fond of her ; but all these, the considerations of an offended spirit, and the fruits of an ill-regulated mind, gave place in their ascendancy in her imagination to the overpowering happiness of being tenderly and exclusively beloved. Possessed, at length, wholly by these reflections, Rosabel journeyed on comparatively in happiness. The sun appeared to her to brighten, and the road to be embellished with new beauties, as her mental atmosphere improved. The novelty of travelling added to the stimulus ; and she looked forth on the varied and now romantic scenes through which she passed with an awakened interest. By degrees, the troubles and the concerns of home appeared less important to her. She saw that there was a world beyond Hales Park ; new ideas arose, and she began to be curious about the concerns, and feelings, and passions, and occupations of others.

It was almost night-fall, before the travellers turned off the high road into a narrow and rutty lane, which led across this part of the country to Southwell, the village where Mr. Evelyn

resided. It was a clear, fine afternoon in March, and the sounds of the sheep bell, and the sight of the rustic shepherd boy, were soon, in that unfrequented region, where then the cotton mill was unknown, the only vestiges of occupation and of social habits. The night had quite closed in, before the carriage, after ascending for some time, entered a straggling village, and Rosabel and her attendant hailed the cottage lights, though few and far between, and heard with satisfaction, the sounds of voices. At length they stopped before a wicket gate, and Rosabel was advised to descend into the rector's garden by a flight of steps; in preference to turning into the stable yard, garnished round with wooden barns, out-houses, and sheds, for the reception of the good man's tithes in kind; the post-boy, who knew the Rectory well, assuring Rosabel that the yard was never too clean, and that, from a late trampling of young creatures—heifers, lambs, and other rustic contributions—it was now almost impassable by foot. Rosabel, therefore, leaving her servant to unpack the luggage, made her way as well as she could round to the

front door, which opened into the garden. She was an unexpected visitor, and in fear and trembling, for it was several years since she had seen her aunt, and her uncle she had never known, she navigated her course with difficulty down a dark passage, until she arrived at the sitting parlour, where the rector and the rector's lady were spending in tranquil tête-a-tête their unbroken evening.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.





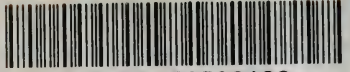








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